

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 PropertyHistoric name: Cedarbrook Elementary SchoolOther names/site number: W. Townes Lea Elementary School; DHR ID# 108-6195Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

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

2. LocationStreet & number: 439 Cedarbrook DriveCity or town: Danville State: VA County: Independent CityNot For Publication: ☐ N/AVicinity: ☐ N/A**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
Signature of certifying official/Title:2/20/2025
DateVirginia Department of Historic Resources

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria._____
Signature of commenting official:_____
Date_____
Title :_____
State or Federal agency/bureau
or Tribal Government

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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 ☐

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION: school

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT: International Style

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

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

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

Located at 439 Cedarbrook Drive in Danville, Virginia, Cedarbrook Elementary School is situated on a 10.27-acre site in a residential suburb. Constructed in 1962-63 in an International Style design by Lyles, Bissett, Carlisle, and Wolff (LBC&W), the one-story building features horizontal massing, a flat roof accentuated by a steel fascia beam, and brick veneer walls. The banks of aluminum windows are accented with porcelain enamel panels and structural glazed tile. The original "L" of the building consists of a central entrance with the library and cafeteria to the south and the twelve original classrooms forming the intersecting wing to the north. A T-shaped covered exterior walkway shelters the entrance and connects the cafeteria and north wing. Designed in 1969 by the same firm, a one-story, brick veneer wing with a flat roof forms the current "U" configuration. This south wing was expanded in the mid-1980s with a gymnasium addition. Interior finishes include painted concrete block walls, glazed concrete block wainscot, terrazzo and vinyl asbestos tile floors, and acoustical tile ceilings. The original 1962-63 section features interior banks of operable windows at the entrances to the library and classrooms. With little to no alterations to the original school and 1969 classroom wing, Cedarbrook Elementary School retains a high degree of historic integrity.

Narrative Description

Site and Setting

Cedarbrook Elementary School is in the Stokesland neighborhood of Danville, Virginia. The 10.27-acre parcel, recently subdivided from the original 22-acre parcel, is near the city's western limits, about a half mile west of West Main Street and the Danville Golf Club. The school faces east to Cedarbrook Drive, with a setback of about 140 feet, and is fronted by a lawn planted with

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grass, shrubs, and a few deciduous trees. A semicircular driveway and concrete sidewalk approach the school entrance. The U-shape formed by the 1962-63 school and its 1969 addition creates a grassy rear courtyard enclosed by a chain-link fence. A small parking lot is located northeast of the school. A wooded area is at the rear of the property. To the south, now on a separate parcel, is a baseball diamond and a blacktop area for games. The surrounding neighborhood possesses a suburban and residential character, comprising houses built in the mid-20th century.

Exterior

Constructed in 1962-63, Cedarbrook Elementary School is a one-story, brick-faced masonry building with a flat roof. The school expresses the International Style with simple geometric forms, minimal ornamentation, and horizontal massing. The U-shaped building is divided into four sections: the front wing, oriented north-south, with a library, administrative offices, and cafeteria; the north wing, oriented east-west, which contains the twelve original classrooms; the south wing, oriented east-west, which is a 1969 addition containing five classrooms; and a mid-1980s gymnasium addition at the rear of the school, connected to the 1969 addition by a narrow hyphen.

Defining exterior characteristics include a flat roof, walls faced in stretcher bond brick veneer and structural glazed tile, and banks of aluminum windows, accented by porcelain enamel panels at the front entrance and cafeteria. A T-shaped covered exterior walkway with a flat roof supported by steel posts approaches the main entrance and connects the cafeteria to the north classroom wing. A steel fascia beam with sheet-metal coping unifies the roof lines of the original school, the 1969 addition, and the covered walkway.

On the front elevation, three single-leaf, flush main entrance doors are contained within an aluminum-frame window wall system with plate glass in the top two rows and tan porcelain enamel panels in the bottom row. The walls to each side of the main entrance are faced with tan structural glazed tiles arranged in a vertical stack bond. Flanking the structural glazed tile walls are aluminum-frame window wall systems, each with rows of plate glass across the top and a row of blue porcelain enamel panels across the bottom.

The north classroom wing is characterized by plain brick walls on its front and rear elevations and banks of aluminum sash windows on the side elevations, recessed between engaged brick piers. The windows rest on cast stone sills over blue structural glazed tiles in a stack bond and are divided into 18 lights: 6 vertical columns of 3 lights. Deeply recessed entrances are centered on the front and rear of the north classroom wing with double-leaf, half-light doors with single-pane sidelights and transoms.

The cafeteria, located at the southeast corner of the original school, is slightly taller than the rest of the building and incorporates an aluminum frame and glass curtain wall system accented by panels of blue porcelain enamel on its front elevation. On the plain brick wall of the cafeteria adjacent to the curtain wall are aluminum channel letters that spell "W. Townes Lea Elementary School." Brick wing walls project out from the face of the cafeteria on the front and side

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elevations adding visual interest. The cafeteria has exterior entrances on side elevations, each containing paired doors. Porcelain enamel panels accentuate the wall above the south elevation doors. Behind the cafeteria is the kitchen, which features several windows and utilitarian entrances.

The 1969 addition, designed by the same architectural firm as the original school, continues the horizontal massing and material palette. The addition has a flat roof and is faced with brick veneer. The addition also incorporates a steel fascia beam, unifying the original school and the addition at the roof line. The addition features a higher solid-to-void ratio, with fewer windows, arranged in a notably different pattern. The narrow, vertically oriented, and deeply recessed “slot” windows of the addition rest on cast stone sills and stacked glazed blue tile. A one-story gymnasium, connected to the rear of the 1969 addition by a brick hyphen, was added in the mid-1980s. The gym is faced in brick veneer and has a metal, gable roof.

Interior

The interior plan features a single-loaded, north-south corridor at the front entrance that accesses the administrative offices, library, and cafeteria. The spacious cafeteria with a high ceiling is located at the southeast corner of the school. The kitchen is west of the cafeteria. The twelve classrooms and toilets that comprise the original 1962-63 school are arranged along a double-loaded, east-west corridor at the north end of the building. Four classrooms in this wing feature individual toilet rooms. The 1962-63 section of the school incorporates banks of operable windows into the corridor walls around the classroom doors and the library to provide natural light and ventilation to the corridors. The 1969 addition comprises five classrooms and grouped toilets arranged along a double-loaded, east-west corridor. Folding partitions separate four of the classrooms.

Modern materials characterize the corridors and classrooms of the original 1962-63 school and 1969 addition. The corridors are distinguished with terrazzo floors and a 6-foot 8-inch glazed concrete block wainscot. The classrooms, library, cafeteria, and administrative offices are finished with painted concrete block walls with bases of glazed concrete block and vinyl asbestos tile floors. The windows rest on slate stools. The kitchen features glazed concrete block wainscot and quarry tile floors. The toilets have ceramic tile floors and glazed tile walls. There are acoustical tile ceilings throughout most of the school and plaster ceilings in the toilets and kitchen. Interior doors are generally simple painted wood slabs in hollow metal frames. Many doors contain square vision lights.

Statement of Integrity

The 1962-63 Cedarbrook Elementary School retains the physical features that define its historic character as a mid-20th century elementary school that reflects trends in education and school design during the decades following World War II. Although the original 22-acre site has been subdivided from the surrounding public park, the property retains integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association. The school remains on a large, grassy 10.27-acre parcel in a suburban residential neighborhood, where it still physically serves as the nucleus of the Stokesland

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neighborhood. Compared to the surrounding one-story Ranch houses, the large scale of the building tangibly expresses its significance to the neighborhood that developed around it. Little to no changes have been made to the historic landscape features, such as the semi-circular driveway, covered walkway, minimal landscaping, and the rear courtyard.

The school retains integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. The exteriors of the 1962-63 school and 1969 addition – including their character-defining one-story forms with flat roofs and horizontal massing, brick veneer, windows, and accents of enameled porcelain panels and structural glazed tile – are intact. The historic floor plans of the 1962-63 school and 1969 addition also remain remarkably intact. The classrooms, cafeteria, library, and offices retain their initial configurations along the corridors. Most original interior finishes and features appear to remain substantially intact.

The mid-1980s gym addition does not negatively impact the integrity of the historic school as it is compatible with its scale, massing, and materials and is located at the rear, connected by only a small hyphen.

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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

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1962-1969

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Lyles, Bissett, Carlisle, and Wolff (architect)

John W. Daniel and Co. (builder)

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 1962-1963 Cedarbrook Elementary School in Danville, Virginia, is eligible for the National Register under Criterion C with significance on the local level in the area of Architecture as a mid-century elementary school that embodies distinctive characteristics of post-World War II scholastic building design and methods of construction. Designed by the well-known South Carolina firm of Lyles, Bissett, Carlisle, and Wolff (LBC&W), the International Style elementary school reflects the interface between changing trends in Progressive education philosophy and the evolution of the Modern architectural movement that abandoned historical references. Additionally, its design demonstrates how new building materials and technologies were utilized to meet the demand for rapid and economical school construction during unprecedented growth in the school-age population following World War II. Located on a large tract of land in the center of the Stokesland annexation area, Cedarbrook Elementary School's sprawling, one-story design also illustrates the impact of suburban development on school design

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during the second half of the 20th century. As one of six elementary schools constructed in Danville in the post war era, including three designed by LBC&W, Cedarbrook Elementary School is the most intact and therefore best embodies the distinctive characteristics of the post war design as practiced in Danville. The period of significance for the school begins in 1962, the year of its original design and construction, and ends in 1969, to encompass its addition, which was designed by the same firm and continued to reflect changing trends in school design.

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

Criterion C Justification: Architecture

The 1962-1963 Cedarbrook Elementary School meets Criterion C with significance on the local level in the area of Architecture as it embodies distinctive characteristics of a mid-20th century elementary school designed in the International Style to respond to changing trends in Progressive educational pedagogy and the modern architectural movement. Constructed using modern materials and building techniques, the school also demonstrates the use of distinctive construction methods developed following World War II to meet the demand for rapid and economical school construction during an era of unprecedented growth in the school-age population. Located on an expansive site in the newly-annexed Stokesland area, the sprawling, one-story building illustrates the influence of suburban development on scholastic building design during the second half of the 20th century as it encouraged community use of the building and surrounding recreational amenities and allowed for future building expansion with the growth of the neighborhood.

Designed by the well-known South Carolina firm of Lyles, Bissett, Carlisle, and Wolff (LBC&W) in the International Style, Cedarbrook Elementary School represents the response of modern architecture to the child-centered approach to Progressive elementary school education that dominated mid-century school design. The one-story form with a flat roof and horizontal massing, along with the covered exterior walkways, achieved a human scale that welcomed rather than overwhelmed young students. Likewise, the entrance and banks of windows, accented by porcelain enamel panels and structural glazed tiles, created transparency that allowed an approaching child to see and comprehend the activities happening inside before entering the building. On the interior, the plan is organized by activity type with the more public administrative offices at the central front entrance and the gathering spaces of the library and cafeteria to the left (south). The original twelve classrooms flank a double-loaded corridor that forms the north wing of the original "L" configuration. This clustering of activities served to separate the more publicly accessible gathering spaces of the entrance, administrative offices, library, and cafeteria from the less public spaces of the classrooms for both noise and activity control. Lower ceilings that provided a more residential feeling, and operable banks of windows on the interior corridor walls that brought additional natural light to the classrooms and library, also reflect the impact of the Progressive educational movement on mid-century school design.

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The practical design and economical construction of Cedarbrook Elementary School also demonstrate how advances in materials and building technologies available after World War II enabled rapid and cost-effective construction to meet the unprecedented demand for new schools. With a contract amount of \$328,800, the twelve-classroom school was completed in approximately nine months utilizing mass-produced and standardized building components such as a concrete-slab foundation, steel frame, concrete block walls, brick veneer, structural glazed tile, porcelain enamel panels, glass curtain walls, and banks of aluminum-frame windows. The interior finishes of painted block walls, glazed-block wainscot and trim, acoustical-tile ceilings, and terrazzo or vinyl asbestos tile flooring provided cost-effective and durable surfaces made necessary by the heavy use of an active student population. The construction method utilized at Cedarbrook also provided flexibility—a cornerstone of Progressive education—that allowed for the original building to be expanded easily with later additions in 1969 and the mid-1980s.

Additionally, the rear courtyard and the surrounding site embody distinctive characteristics of mid-century elementary school design that respond to the Progressive pedagogy of integrating indoor and outdoor space for education. Easy access to the surrounding site provided ample areas for outdoor recreation, which expanded the play, learning, and socialization opportunities for students. The interior banks of operable windows surrounding the doors to the library and the original classrooms also reinforced this integration of the outdoors into the building interior by providing additional sources of natural light and ventilation

The exterior of the 1969 classroom addition, also designed by LBC&W, continues the one-story form with the flat roof and horizontal massing of the original building, emphasized by a wide steel fascia beam extending along the roofline, as well as the use of similar materials in the steel-frame construction with brick veneer accented by structural glazed tile. This classroom addition and mid-1980s gymnasium form the south wing and continue the plan organization by activity type while also incorporating folding partition walls between classrooms to enhance the flexibility of the space. The fenestration of the 1969 classroom addition, however, has a much greater solid-to-void ratio as it represents a shift in educational pedagogy and the use of natural light in school design. The vertical “slot” windows, which continue to be accented by stacks of glazed tile at the base, are narrow and recessed individually rather than the large banks of windows that had characterized school buildings since the late 19th century. This change in design reflects the growing desire and ability to control light in the classroom given the increased use of audio-visual equipment and fluorescent lighting.

The expansive site of Cedarbrook Elementary School with its communal recreational amenities, coupled with the sprawling one-story form of the school and its interior arrangement of spaces, also illustrates the impact of suburban development on scholastic design during the second half of the 20th century. The post-war population boom, combined with the pent-up demand from years without new construction, resulted in an unprecedented need for housing and schools. With the increased availability of automobiles, much of the construction of new housing and the associated schools occurred as part of suburban development. This new type of development, characterized by larger lots with sprawling, low-rise houses designed to integrate interior and exterior spaces, encouraged a similar approach to the siting and design of schools. Unlike the

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multi-story schools built during the late 19th and early 20th centuries in dense urban centers with limited outdoor amenities, the post-war schools in suburban areas reflected the more informal and accessible aesthetic of the surrounding suburban neighborhood with their low-rise forms and sprawling configurations that integrated with the surrounding sites through courtyards and ample outdoor recreation areas. Removed from the traditional urban center and sometimes privately developed, new suburbs often had fewer public amenities such as libraries, parks, and public gathering spaces. As a result, the public school and its grounds often served a dual function as an unofficial community and recreation center for the suburban neighborhood in addition to its educational purpose. Finally, the speculative nature of suburban development also required that school facilities be flexible and easy to expand to accommodate the growth of the neighborhood. Constructed in the newly annexed Stokesland area, the design of Cedarbrook Elementary School reflects the influence of suburban development in its large site with communal recreation areas, a low-rise form that is both integrated with the site and easy to expand, and an organization of spaces allowing for community access after school hours.

Comparative Analysis

Cedarbrook Elementary School is significant on the local level as part of an extensive school construction campaign by the city of Danville in the years following World War II. In response to increased school enrollment resulting from annexations and the general post-war population boom, as well as deferred maintenance and new construction of school facilities during the years of the Great Depression and war rations, the Danville Board of Education hired the educational consulting firm Engelhardt, Engelhardt, and Leggett in 1954 to prepare a plan for the improvement of school facilities. The 1956 Comprehensive Plan by Harland & Bartholomew referenced this report and recommended a ten-year school construction campaign. As a result of increased school enrollment, efforts to equalize school facilities during the period of Massive Resistance, and new development in the annexation areas, the city built six elementary schools, one junior high school, and two high schools in the post war period between 1952 and 1969. Of these nine schools, seven continue to operate in their historic function as schools. The Danville Public Schools District is currently making extensive renovations to its school buildings as part of a \$140 million capital improvement plan with funding provided by a 2021 sales tax referendum and a 2023 grant from the Virginia Board of Education.¹ While it is important that these historic schools continue to operate as schools, the completed and proposed renovations will impact their historic integrity.

The six elementary schools constructed during this postwar period were E.A. Gibson Elementary (1952), G.L.H. Johnson Elementary (1953), Grove Park Elementary (1956), Woodberry Hills Elementary (1959), Cedarbrook Elementary (1962), and Park Avenue Elementary (1967). E.A. Gibson, Woodberry Hills, and Park Avenue continue to operate today as elementary schools. The 1952 E.A. Gibson Elementary, built for Black students, and 1953 G.L.H. Johnson Elementary, built for white students, are nearly identical schools built during the school equalization era. While these two-story International Style schools do reflect the impact of Progressive

¹ Danville Public Schools, "Voters Approve Sales Tax Referendums for Schools"; Frolo, Caitlyn, 2023.

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educational pedagogy on school design, these schools no longer retain integrity. E.A Gibson Elementary has been significantly renovated and now has modern, incompatible windows. Meanwhile G.L.H. Johnson Elementary is in the process of being demolished to build a new school on the campus, named Arnette Hills Elementary School.² The 1956 Grove Park Elementary School is a one-story, brick-veneer school originally built for white students designed in a simplified interpretation of the International Style. Currently operating as a preschool, the building has been renovated, and the original ribbon windows have been altered. The 1959 Woodberry Hills Elementary School, also originally built for white students and designed by LBC&W in the International Style, employs design features also found at Cedarbrook, including a one-story form with a flat roof and strong horizontal elements, brick veneer cladding, and large banks of windows. Continuing to operate as an elementary school, the windows at Woodberry Hills have been replaced, and additional renovations are planned. The 1967 Park Avenue Elementary School is another example of a one-story suburban school designed by LBC&W; however, its simple brick-veneer form that lacks additional articulation and narrow, vertical slot windows represent a shift in educational pedagogy and the use of natural light in school design. The original flat roof of this school also has been significantly modified with an inappropriate metal hipped roof that alters the school's overall massing and form.

The ca. 1969 North Danville Junior High School (currently O.T. Bonner Middle School) was also designed by LBC&W. It is a larger school, with one- and two-story sections. The school is minimalistic in its design yet lacks the subtle articulation of expressed materials and contrasting textures associated with the International Style. With its narrow, vertical slot windows and expanses of solid brick veneer walls, the design of this school shares design similarities and reflects the same shift in education pedagogy as the 1967 Park Avenue Elementary and Cedarbrook Elementary's 1969 addition.

The two high schools built during the post war period include the 1956 George Washington High School, built for white students, and the 1958 Langston High School, built for Black students. These two schools were constructed to provide separate but equal facilities during the period of Massive Resistance in Virginia. Although not completed until 1956, George Washington High School was designed in 1953 by the architecture firm Thompson and Ragland as a two-story building in a Stripped Classical iteration of the International Style. Until recently, the brick exterior remained relatively intact with only some window replacements; however, renovations begun in 2023 include a new main entrance, a new gymnasium, and renovated classrooms as it continues to serve as the main high school for Danville.³ Langston High School, designed by LBC&W in the International Style, is a two-story brick building that includes some exterior features similar to Cedarbrook Elementary School, such as large banks of windows accented with blue porcelain enamel panels. The facility was converted to a junior high school when the school system was integrated in 1970. The former Langston High School is currently undergoing extensive exterior

² Danville Public Schools, "Construction and Renovations."

³ Frolo, Caitlyn, 2023.

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and interior renovations to serve as the Galileo Magnet School and School District Administration Office.⁴

Of the nine schools, including six elementary schools, constructed by the city of Danville between 1952 and 1969, Cedarbrook Elementary School remains the most intact and best example of a mid-century suburban elementary school designed in the International Style. Additionally, Cedarbrook Elementary School is the most intact example of the elementary schools designed by LBC&W for the Danville School Board during this post-war period when the well-known South Carolina firm appears to have designed all new public schools and many additions to existing public schools in Danville.

Historical Background

Following World War II, the city of Danville experienced tremendous growth in land area and population due to the general post-war population boom as well as its significant annexation of adjacent areas in Pittsylvania County in 1951. The annexation of 6,201 acres increased the city's total land area by 154 percent to 10,231 acres, and the population grew by 32.8 percent.⁵ In response to this growth and in an effort to equalize racially-segregated schools to avoid integration, Danville embarked on an extensive school improvement plan between 1952 and ca. 1968 with the construction of six elementary schools, one junior high school, and two high schools. The 1956 Comprehensive Plan for Danville by Harland Bartholomew and Associates included an analysis of the 1951 annexation areas with recommendations for civic infrastructure improvements, including new schools, that were considered necessary for their development. Noting that all of the elementary schools except one were at 100 percent capacity, the plan predicted that school enrollment would increase by 8,078 pupils within the next decade.⁶

Cedarbrook was one of three new elementary schools planned and built over the next decade based on the 1956 Comprehensive Plan recommendations. The Stokesland area, where Cedarbrook Elementary School is located, was identified in the plan as one of several annexation areas where new residential growth and development were expected.⁷ In theory, the new schools and associated recreational facilities would serve as a nucleus for these areas of anticipated suburban growth and would help attract new residents to the neighborhood they served.⁸ The plan recommended building an elementary school in the Stokesland area with a capacity for 540 students, a minimum site size of 10.4 acres, and a location near the center of the neighborhood.⁹

Voters approved a bond for a new elementary school for the Stokesland area in the fall of 1961. The school was designed by Lyles, Bissett, Carlisle, and Wolff (LBC&W) of South Carolina. The new school in Stokesland would replace the West End School, a White elementary school

⁴ Hoffman, Cherisse.

⁵ Harland Bartholomew & Associates, 1956:17-18.

⁶ Ibid, 162.

⁷ Ibid:136-137, 146-147.

⁸ Ibid, 164.

⁹ Ibid:166.

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built in Pittsylvania County in 1922, before the annexation. The new school was planned on a 22-acre site to include twelve classrooms, a library, administrative offices, and a cafeteria. The construction contract was awarded to local contractor John W. Daniel and Co. in May 1962 for \$328,800.¹⁰ The Danville School Board announced in December 1962 that the new Cedarbrook Elementary School would likely be ready for occupancy in February 1963.¹¹

Opening as a new elementary school for white students in early 1963, Cedarbrook Elementary School represents how new school construction in the rapidly expanding, and predominantly White, suburbs in Danville and throughout Virginia perpetuated de facto segregation in public schools.¹² Following the 1954 and 1955 landmark decisions in *Brown v. Board of Education* that ruled segregated schools were inherently unequal and must be integrated “with all deliberate speed,” Virginia maintained segregation in public education until 1959. This policy, known as Massive Resistance (1956-1959), attempted to avoid school integration in Virginia by providing “separate but equal” school facilities. Although the 1959 Freedom of Choice policy established by the General Assembly allowed for limited integration by application and assignment, Danville continued to operate a segregated school system until the mid-1960s. After five Black students opted to attend the all-White George Washington High School in 1964, Danville finally instituted the Freedom of Choice policy the following academic year beginning in 1965. That same year, students entering the first, seventh, and ninth grades were assigned to schools, including Cedarbrook Elementary School, based on their geographic residence rather than race.¹³

In 1968, the Supreme Court rejected the Freedom of Choice policy and required school systems to submit desegregation plans. The US Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) approved the city of Danville plan in March 1969; however, Danville public schools did not fully integrate until the 1970-1971 school year. When the new school opened in 1963, Cedarbrook Elementary School students in the first through fourth grades would have attended the newly integrated high schools in Danville that year.

By 1968, a building boom in the Stokesland area necessitated the temporary addition of two mobile classroom units at Cedarbrook Elementary School to accommodate increased school enrollment. As a result, a five-classroom addition, also designed by LBC&W, was completed in 1969.¹⁴ A gymnasium, connected by a hyphen at the southwest corner of the addition, was constructed in the mid-1980s. Cedarbrook Elementary School was later renamed W. Townes Lea Elementary School in 1983, in honor of the former Danville School Superintendent who served from 1955 to 1983. The school continued to operate as an elementary school until 2012.¹⁵

Lyles, Bissett, Carlisle, and Wolff (LBC&W)

¹⁰ “New Stokesland School Contract Goes to Daniel,” *The Danville Register & Bee*, May 8, 1962.

¹¹ “New Stokesland School To Be Called Cedarbrook,” *The Danville Register & Bee*, December 7, 1962.

¹² Hershman, James.

¹³ Hedrick, James E., 2002:84.

¹⁴ “N. Danville Junior High Plans Nearing Completion,” *The Danville Register & Bee*, June 16, 1968; “\$102,610 Low Bid Offered On Cedarbrook Addition,” *The Danville Register & Bee*, August 7, 1968.

¹⁵ “Cedarbrook renamed for W. Townes Lea,” *The Danville Register & Bee*, June 10, 1983.

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The South Carolina firm of Lyles, Bissett, Carlisle, and Wolff (LBC&W) worked throughout the Southeast from 1948 to 1976. The firm expanded outside South Carolina in the 1960s, with satellite offices in Washington D.C., Virginia, Maryland, and North Carolina. Their portfolio consisted of a wide range of project types, including apartment complexes, private residences, primary and secondary schools, and higher education facilities, as well as government, military, commercial, industrial, and healthcare buildings. Their designs exhibit the influence of the Modernist Movement and primarily employ the International Style, Neo-Formalism, or Brutalism.¹⁶

LBC&W's first known project in Danville was Langston High School, an equalization school built for Black students in 1958. George Washington, Danville's high school for White students, was designed by the architecture firm Thompson and Ragland and was completed in 1956. After Langston High School's completion, it appears that the Danville School Board continued to use LBC&W through the late 1960s to design all new public schools and many additions to existing schools. The firm designed Woodberry Hills Elementary School (1959) and Cedarbrook Elementary School (1962), which were both for White students. LBC&W also designed Park Avenue Elementary School (1967) and North Danville Junior High School (ca. 1969), which opened after Danville instituted the Freedom of Choice policy in 1965. The LBC&W-designed schools in Danville are influenced by the International Style. Of the three elementary schools designed by LBC&W, Woodberry Hills and Cedarbrook are similar with flat roofs, brick veneer, covered walkways, and large banks of windows. Park Avenue differs in its design, with minimal fenestration in narrow, vertical window slots—similar to the 1969 Cedarbrook addition designed by LBC&W.

National Trends in Mid-Century School Design and Construction

Although the sprawling one-story school buildings with flat roofs and minimal detailing built throughout the country during the third quarter of the 20th century may appear mundane and common compared to the monumental and classically inspired designs of their earlier counterparts, the architectural design of mid-20th century schools is distinctly representative of a transformative period of growth and development in the United States. As Americans recovered from the tolls of World War II and faced the uncertainty of the Cold War, the modern architecture of mid-20th century schools reflected an optimistic focus on future generations and embodied the belief that “good design had the power to change behavior and improve society.”¹⁷ With an unprecedented demand for new schools due to population growth and deferred construction and maintenance, the design and construction of new schools following World War II provided a unique opportunity for modern architecture to impact everyday lives across the country. Typically designed in the International Style, mid-century schools illustrate the comprehensive response of modern architecture to the changing trends in Progressive education, the demand for rapid and economical construction, and the role of the school in suburban development that are often overlooked and under-appreciated due to their ubiquitous presence.

¹⁶ Lee, Casey, 2016:20,47.

¹⁷ Ogata, Amy F., 2008:563.

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The Progressive Education Movement and Mid-20th Century School Design

The Progressive education movement in the United States began in the early 1900s with a philosophical shift, promoted by John Dewey, from a regimented approach based on the absolute authority of the teacher and rote memorization to a more nurturing environment centered around the development of the individual child through experiential hands-on learning.¹⁸ Monumental, multi-story school buildings of the early 20th century with classical detailing and grand entrances that emphasized the academic rigor of education were replaced with less imposing, low-rise schools with a flat roof, human-scaled entrance, covered exterior walkways, and simplified detailing designed to welcome rather than overwhelm the student. School design also reflected this shift by expanding the classroom beyond the traditional four walls with the creation of flexible spaces with moveable partition walls and furniture. The school learning environment was further enhanced through the integration of indoor and outdoor spaces by providing easily accessible courtyards and other designated outdoor activity areas – often connected by covered exterior walkways – as well as bringing more natural light into the school building through the incorporation of multiple light sources, including interior windows and glass wall systems.¹⁹

As early as the 1920s and 1930s, architects began responding to the shift in educational philosophy and pedagogy by designing experimental schools that were avant-garde at the time. These well-publicized designs for elementary schools, including Oak Lane Country Day School (1929) and the Hessian Hills School (1931-1932) by the Philadelphia firm Howe and Lescaze, as well as Richard Neutra's open-air schools in California (1927-1939), featured one-story forms with large windows and integrated outdoor activity areas. Completed in 1940, the design by Eliel and Eero Saarinen for the Crow Island School in Winnetka, Illinois, was celebrated as a model school that incorporated the key ideas of creativity, individuality, and experimentation that characterized the Progressive movement in education.²⁰ As a stark departure from the traditional school design of the early 20th century, the low-profile building was integrated into the surrounding site with intentional connections between the classrooms and outdoor spaces, as well as multiple sources of natural light in each classroom. The spatial organization of the interior was based on activity types and grade levels. In contrast, interior finishes gave the spaces a homey, residential feeling with lower ceilings, window drapes, bright colors, and moveable furniture to accommodate different learning activities and be more comfortable for small children. These design elements combined to make school a nurturing experience for the individual child.²¹

Post-World War II School Construction

While the Progressive education movement was well underway before World War II and a few well-known architects had begun responding with avant-garde school designs, the impact was not fully realized until the 1950s and 1960s due to a lack of funding and building materials for

¹⁸ Ibid:563.

¹⁹ Christman, 2016:33-34; Ogata, 2008:563.

²⁰ Ogata, Ibid:564-566.

²¹ Ogata, Ibid, 564-567.

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new school construction during the Great Depression and World War II. In 1947, educators at the National Conference for the Improvement of Teaching declared a national crisis, with an estimated 50-75 percent of existing schools considered obsolete.²² The population boom after World War II exacerbated this situation, resulting in primary and secondary school enrollment more than doubling from 25.1 million in 1949 to 46 million in 1971.²³ This combination of deferred construction and population growth created a need for new schools second only to housing following the war. Additionally, as the United States entered the Cold War era, education became even more critical to ensure a successful economy and democracy to compete against the Soviet Union.²⁴

Numerous publications, including professional journals in education and architecture, as well as popular newspapers and magazines, called attention to this predicament. Benjamin Fine, a reporter with *The New York Times*, conducted a six-month survey in 1947 of educators on all levels and published a series of more than a dozen articles. Fine concluded that “the education received by young American citizens — the future voters of the land — does not meet present-day needs of society. Although we are living in an atomic age, our children are receiving a horse-and-buggy education.”²⁵

The nationally distributed *Life* magazine also reported on the overcrowded and unsafe conditions of schools as well as the need for improvements to compete against the Soviet Union in several articles, including “War Babies Hit the First Grade” in September 1949, “New Schools, Economy Too” in February 1954, and “Crisis in Education” in March 1958.²⁶ In the last article, *Life* claimed that “the schools are in terrible shape. What has long been an ignored national problem, Sputnik has made a recognized crisis.”²⁷ These publications successfully brought national attention to the need for new and improved schools and, perhaps more importantly, taxpayer support to fund them. By 1964, postwar school construction in the United States totaled \$20 billion.²⁸

In addition to the urgent need for new school construction, the war demands on materials and the post-war construction boom led to a significant rise in construction costs that added to the challenge. A 1954 article in *Life* magazine reported that “in 1930, \$100,000 would buy a ten-room school; in 1940, it would buy an eight-room school; and in 1950, it would buy a four-room school.”²⁹ The post-war surge in the demand and cost for new schools required design and construction solutions that would be efficient, functional, and cost-effective.³⁰ As public schools

²² Fine, Benjamin, “Building Program for Schools Urged.” *The New York Times*, July 5, 1947; cited in Christman, Abigail, 2016:12.

²³ Ogata, 2008: 562.

²⁴ Ibid:16.

²⁵ Fine, Benjamin, “Teacher Shortage Imperils Our Public School System.” *New York Times*, February 10, 1947; cited in Christman, 2016:12.

²⁶ Christman, 2016:13, 18.

²⁷ “Crisis in Education,” *Life*, March 24, 1958, 25; cited in Christman, 2016:18.

²⁸ Ward, Hugh 2015:4.

²⁹ “New Schools, Economy Too.” *Life*. February 1, 1954; cited in Christman, 2016:28.

³⁰ Ogata, 2008: 562.

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were typically funded by local bond referendums, taxpayers were directly invested in the cost of new school construction and expected their public dollars to be spent efficiently and effectively.³¹

Innovations in design, building materials, and construction techniques to meet these criteria included school designs with standardized components that could be mass-produced as well as plans that could be easily modified with moveable partitions or additions to adapt to changing curriculum and enrollment. Schools were also often designed to be constructed in phases based on projected enrollment and funding.³² Innovations in building materials also contributed to constructing new schools that would be durable, practical, and economical. While architects and manufacturers experimented with new materials during the 1930s and 1940s, the demand by the military for rapid and efficient building techniques during World War II greatly advanced the innovative use of new building materials and methods that benefitted new construction following the war.³³ After ramping up production for the war effort, the steel industry promoted the construction of one-story schools as a fast and cost-effective method of building schools that allowed for increased adaptability with the steel frame construction that eliminated the need for permanent load-bearing walls.³⁴ The steel frame could then be enveloped with a less-expensive skin of brick veneer, concrete block, and aluminum-and-glass curtain walls. Other new materials that provided durability and practicality included hollow concrete block, plywood, plastic, and aluminum. Asphalt and rubber flooring tiles provided more durability, while acoustical materials resulted in thinner ceiling and wall assemblies that could still achieve sound insulation. The use of fluorescent lighting allowed for less dependence on windows for natural light, more light control, and lower utility costs. Prefabricated building components—such as ceiling and wall panels and aluminum-frame curtain wall systems—also saved time and money through mass production and labor costs through repetitious production and installation.³⁵ This emphasis on the use of new materials was touted as early as 1945 in an article in the *Review of Educational Research* that reported: “the trend is toward simplified design—modern not modernistic—and this trend has demonstrated that beauty in architecture can be achieved thru simplicity of line, plain surfaces, and attractive colors rather than thru ornamentation.”³⁶

The International Style and Mid-20th Century School Design

With an emphasis on function and practicality, the International Style was well suited for the design of mid-century schools. Characterized by low, horizontal massing and simple, clean lines, the style employed the innovative use of new materials and construction techniques rather than extraneous ornamentation. As noted by *New York Times* reporter Leonard Buder in 1956, “the so-called ‘frills’ that used to adorn school buildings have gone the way of the hickory stick and

³¹ Christman, 2016:42.

³² Ibid:12.

³³ Ibid:31.

³⁴ Ogata, 2008: 568.

³⁵ Christman, 2016:32.

³⁶ Marsh, Reginald E, 1945:57; cited in Christman 2016:32

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the dunce cap.”³⁷

The elements of the International Style supported the Progressive education movement in mid-century elementary school design as well as the demand for fast and cost-effective construction in the decades following World War II. The low-profile buildings with clear geometric volumes, a flat roof, and simple glass curtain-wall entrance worked well for mid-century elementary schools that aspired to have a human scale that welcomed rather than intimidated the young student. True to the honest expression of function in modern architecture, the simple geometric forms served to identify the functional organization of the plan, with the interior spaces of classrooms, cafeteria, and gymnasium clearly evident from the exterior by their form, massing, and fenestration patterns. Typically built of steel frame on a concrete-slab foundation with a skin of brick veneer, aluminum-and-glass curtain wall systems, and ribbon windows, the International Style of the mid-century school allowed for transparency of function, natural light, and maximum flexibility while also providing for rapid and economical construction. Contrasting, textured, and colorful materials – rather than extraneous ornamentation – achieved visual interest and celebrated new materials while maintaining the simplicity of the style. The asymmetrical balance of the International Style also allowed for flexibility and adaptability – which were cornerstones of the Progressive education movement—as additions could easily be constructed to meet growing school enrollment.

Mid-20th Century Schools and Suburban Development

As the United States population grew and automobiles became more affordable during the prosperous years following World War II, most of the new residential development occurred in suburban areas on the outskirts of towns and cities. As a result, most post-war schools are in the suburbs. This new development pattern led to the emergence of school planners as a profession to address not only the need for new schools but also the coordination of planning these schools as part of the larger suburban development.³⁸ The school was often the first, and sometimes only, civic structure in the new suburban community. As Harland Bartholomew and Associates noted in the 1956 Comprehensive Plan for the City of Danville, “before a residential neighborhood can be considered completely desirable, it must have educational and recreational facilities of the highest standard.”³⁹

The design of the new suburban schools reflected this role in the community. These schools were sited on larger tracts of land to combine the public amenities of the school and park for the surrounding community. As a greater emphasis was placed on the role of play and recreation in education, mid-century schools were designed to take advantage of easily accessible outdoor spaces with their sprawling one-story form that included multiple entrances (sometimes directly from the classroom) and covered exterior walkways as well as courtyards, sports fields/courts,

³⁷ “New Schools of Thought: Modern Trend in Education Is Reflected in Buildings Themselves.” *New York Times*, December 16, 1956; cited in Christman, 2016:25.

³⁸ Ogata 2008, 570

³⁹ Harland Bartholomew & Associates, 1956:150.

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and other designated activity areas.⁴⁰ As a result, new school construction required larger tracts of land, with school planners recommending a minimum of five acres plus one additional acre per 100 students for elementary schools and ten acres plus one additional acre per 100 students for high schools.⁴¹ Not only did these large tracts allow for future expansion of the school but they could also be justified to the taxpayers by serving as a public recreation area.⁴²

The school building was also designed to serve as a place for various community activities, such as musical or dramatic performances, civic or club meetings, adult education, voting precincts, and recreational sports.⁴³ This was accomplished by locating the cafeteria, library, auditorium, or gymnasium in a manner that allowed for limited and secured access (which often included exterior entrances directly into the dual-use space) for community residents to utilize outside of school hours.⁴⁴ In addition to avoiding redundancy and saving taxpayer money with this dual use of the school building and site, suburban schools created a community center that would serve as the nucleus of the neighborhood and attract new residential development.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Christman, 2016: 34-35

⁴¹ Ibid:35.

⁴² Christman, 2016:35; Harland & Bartholomew, 1956:152.

⁴³ Christman, 2016: 26.

⁴⁴ Ibid:35.

⁴⁵ Harland & Bartholomew, 1956:136-137, 146-147, 150, 152.

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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

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): DHR #108-6195

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 10.27

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 36.561103 | Longitude: -79.465622 |
| 2. Latitude: 36.560388 | Longitude: -79.464273 |
| 3. Latitude: 36.558507 | Longitude: -79.464784 |
| 4. Latitude: 36.559462 | Longitude: -79.467180 |

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

☐ NAD 1927 or ☐ NAD 1983

- | | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

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

The current boundary corresponds to the lot lines of 439 Cedarbrook Drive, recorded by the City of Danville as parcel number 59803. The true and correct historic boundary is shown on the attached Tax Parcel Map and Sketch Map + Photo Key.

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Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary of the 10.27-acre parcel nominated represents the legal boundaries of the property currently associated with the former Cedarbrook Elementary School. Adjacent land that was historically part of the original 22-acre school parcel, which continues to contribute to its historic setting, is under separate and unrelated ownership.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Katie Gutshall & Alison Blanton
organization: Hill Studio
street & number: 120 Campbell Avenue SW
city or town: Roanoke state: VA zip code: 24011
e-mail: kgutshall@hillstudio.com/ablanton@hillstudio.com
telephone: (540) 342-5263
date: August 2024

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.
- **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.

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Photo Log

Name of Property: Cedarbrook Elementary School

City or Vicinity: Danville

County: N/A

State: Virginia

Photographer: Kate Kronau

Date Photographed: January 2024

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

1 of 22. Front, view southwest.

2 of 22. Front, view west.

3 of 22. Front entrance, view west.

4 of 22. Covered exterior walkway, view north.

5 of 22. Side, view southwest.

6 of 22. Side, view northwest.

7 of 22. Side, view east.

8 of 22. Rear, view northeast.

9 of 22. Rear, view south.

10 of 22. Rear, view west.

11 of 22. Interior, single-loaded corridor, view north.

12 of 22. Interior, administration offices, view northwest.

13 of 22. Interior, library, view southeast.

14 of 22. Interior, double-loaded corridor, view west.

15 of 22. Interior, classroom, view northwest.

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16 of 22. Interior, classroom, view northwest.

17 of 22. Interior, cafeteria, view south.

18 of 22. Interior, kitchen, view west.

19 of 22. Interior, addition, corridor, view east.

20 of 22. Interior, addition, classroom, view east.

21 of 22. Interior, addition, classroom, view southwest.

22 of 22. Interior, gymnasium addition, view northeast.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations 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.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

Tier 1 – 60-100 hours

Tier 2 – 120 hours

Tier 3 – 230 hours

Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.



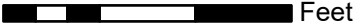
LOCATION MAP

Cedarbrook Elementary School
City of Danville, VA
DHR ID# 108-6195

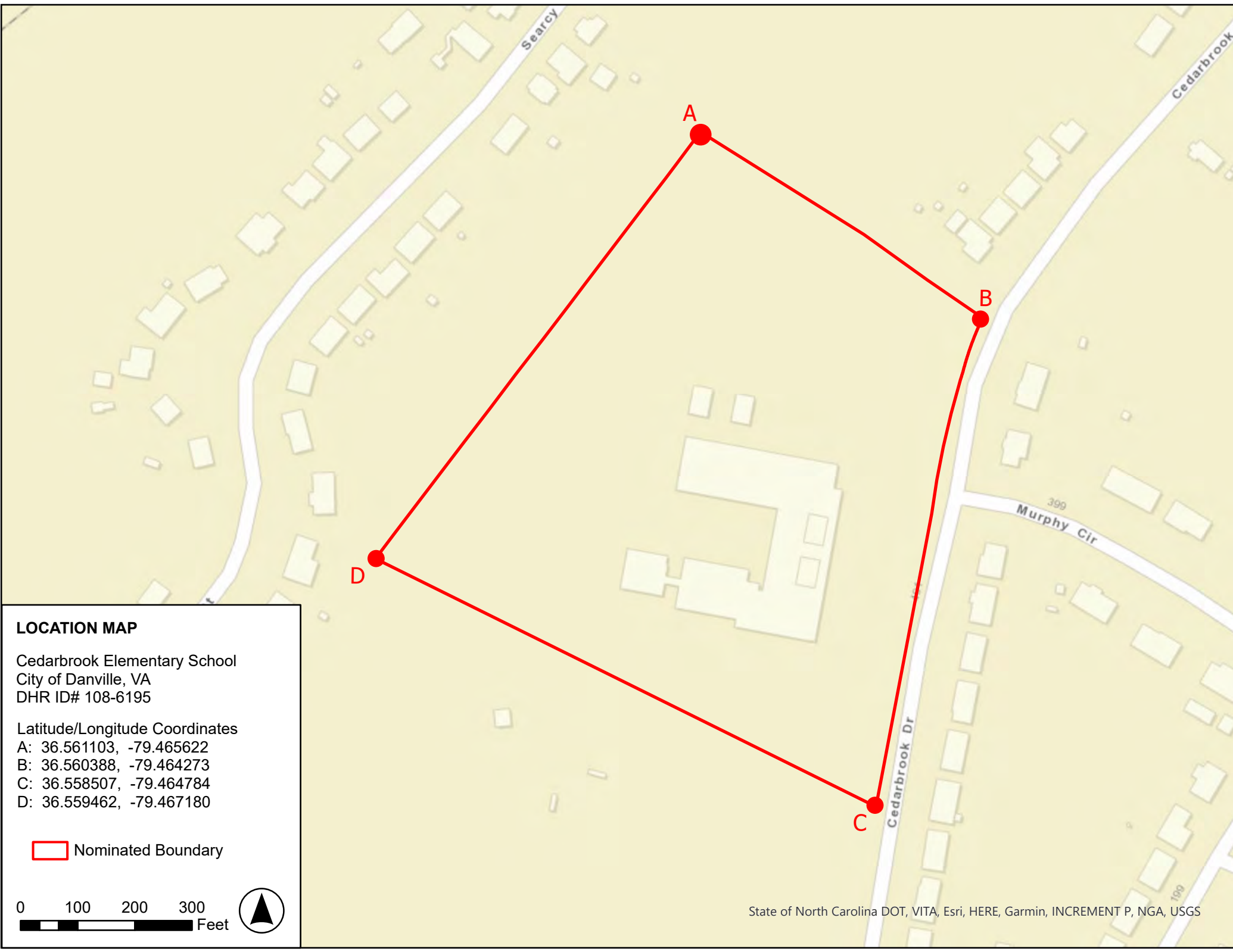
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A: 36.561103, -79.465622
B: 36.560388, -79.464273
C: 36.558507, -79.464784
D: 36.559462, -79.467180

 Nominated Boundary

0 100 200 300
 Feet





LOCATION MAP

Cedarbrook Elementary School
City of Danville, VA
DHR ID# 108-6195

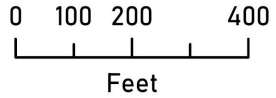
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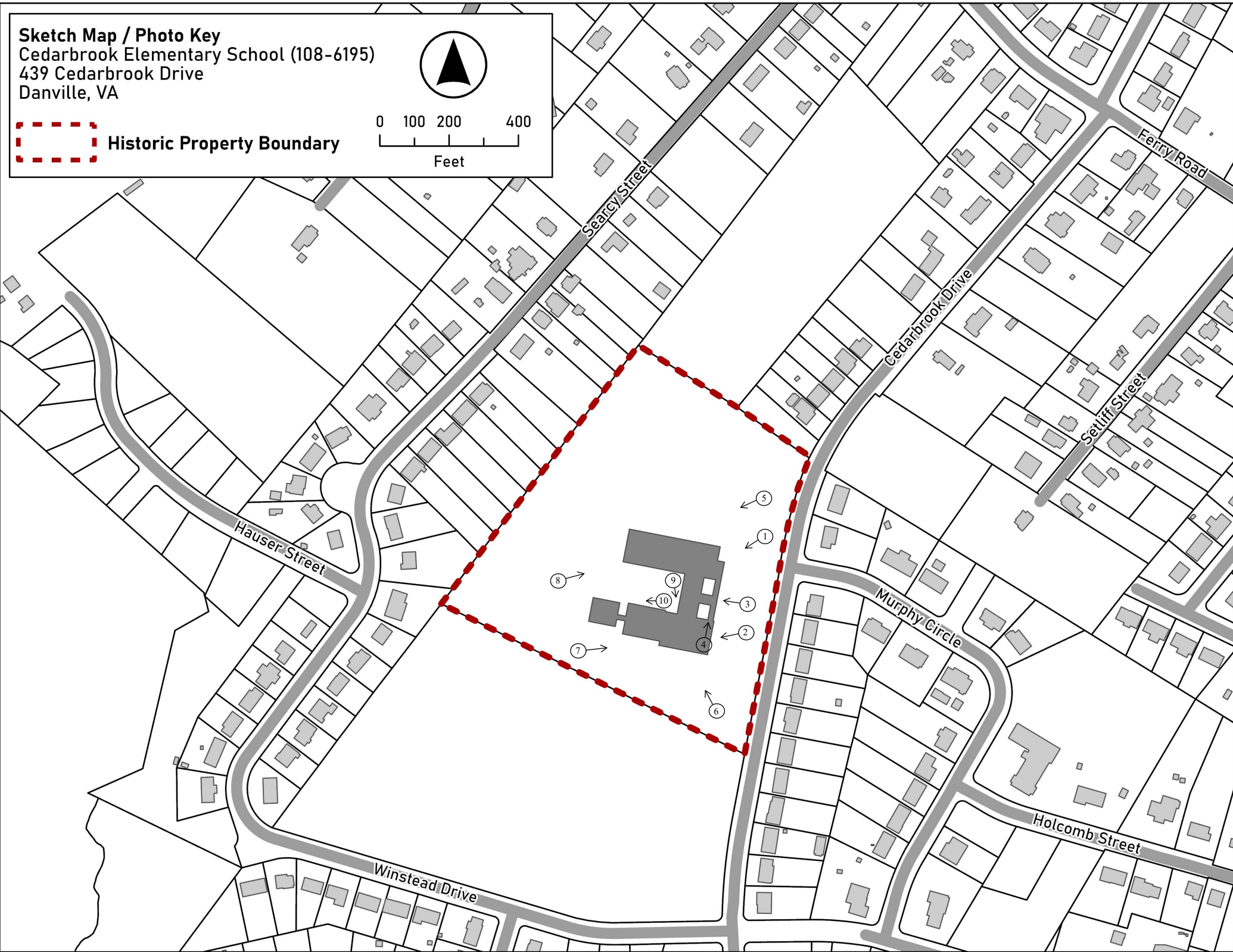
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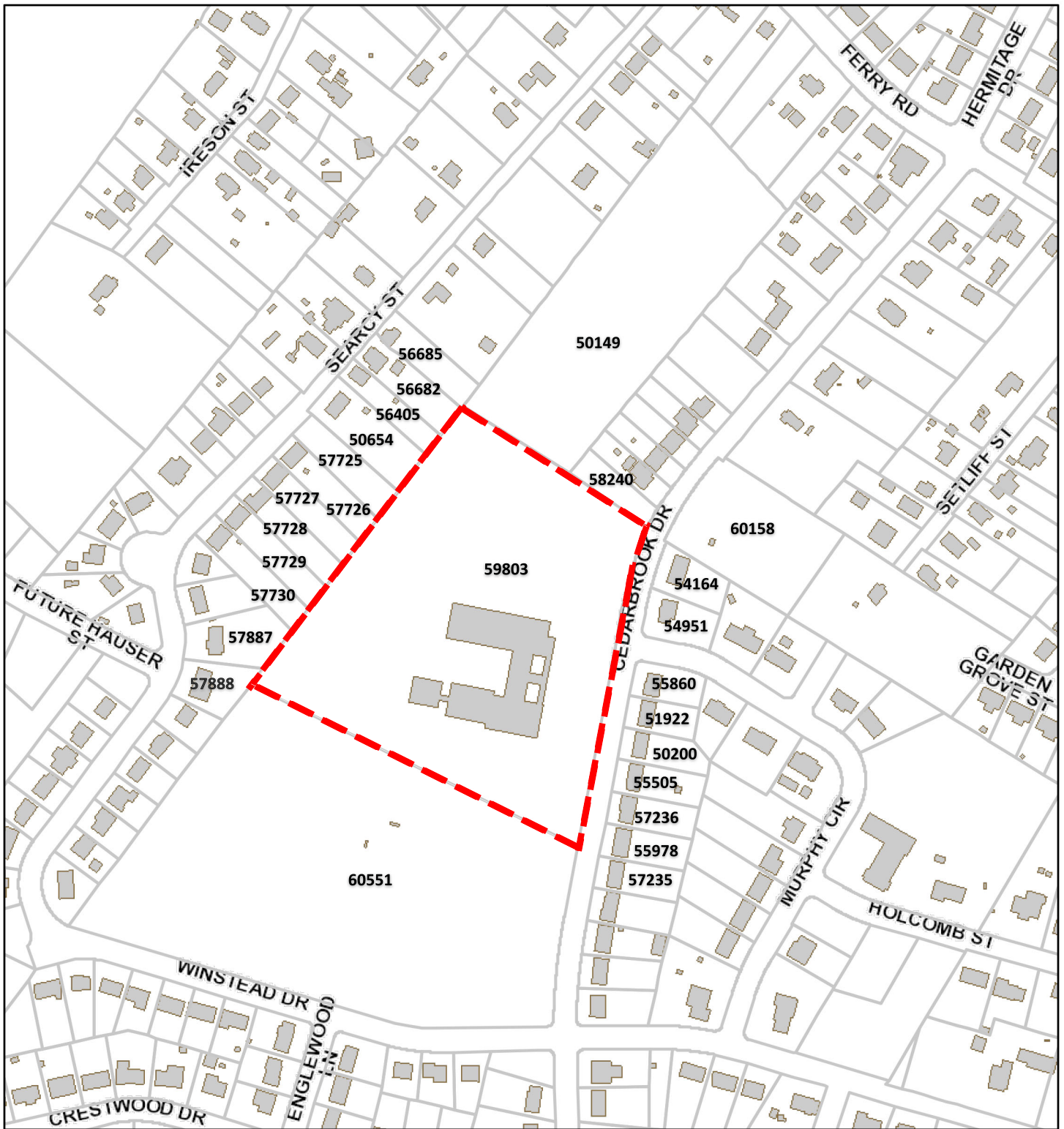


Sketch Map / Photo Key
Cedarbrook Elementary School (108-6195)
439 Cedarbrook Drive
Danville, VA



 **Historic Property Boundary**





Tax Parcel Map

Cedarbrook Elementary School (108-6195)
439 Cedarbrook Drive
Danville, VA
Date Obtained: 09-04-2024

