



PRELIMINARY INFORMATION FORM (PIF) for INDIVIDUAL PROPERTIES

Note: PIFs are prepared by applicants and evaluated by DHR staff and the State Review Board based on information known at the time of preparation. Recommendations concerning PIFs are subject to change if new information becomes available.

DHR No. (to be completed by DHR staff) 063-5159

1. General Property Information

Property name: Cumberland Community Center

Property address: 12540 New Kent Highway

City or Town: New Kent, VA

Zip code: 23124

Name of the Independent City or County where the property is located: New Kent County

Category of Property (choose only one of the following):

Building X Site _____ Structure _____ Object _____

2. Physical Aspects

Acreage: 2 acres

Setting (choose only one of the following):

Urban _____ Suburban _____ Town _____ Village _____ Hamlet _____ Rural x

Briefly describe the property's overall location and setting, including any notable landscape features:

Two acres of land located on the north side of Highway 33, east of New Kent Courthouse, and being the same land which was conveyed to by R.W. Taylor and Myra Y. Vaiden to the School Board of Cumberland District, of New Kent County, Virginia by deed dated February 12, 1921, and recorded in Deed Book 17, page 275, in the Clerk's Office of New Kent County, bid in at \$2,900.00 by John O. Brown, Acting for and on behalf of the trustees of Cumberland Community Center.

3. Architectural Description

Architectural Style(s): _____

If the property was designed by an architect, landscape architect, engineer, or other professional, please list here: _____

If the builder is known, please list here: _____

Date of construction (can be approximate): 1970

Narrative Description (Please do not exceed one page in describing the property):

Briefly describe the property's general characteristics, such as its current use (and historic use if different), as well as the primary building or structure on the property (such as a house, store, mill, factory, depot, bridge, etc.). Include the materials and method(s) of construction, physical appearance and condition (exterior and interior), and any additions or other major alterations.

The site is a 2-acre property located on New Kent Highway, previously home to the Cumberland Rosenwald Colored School, destroyed by arson in 1968.

The current structure built in 1970 is a one story, 9138 square foot cinder block building with 2 restrooms, a banquet hall, storage room, and kitchen.

The original roof needs replacement. The exterior requires painting. and the double entrance doors and the exit door from the kitchen need to be replaced. Some restroom updates are also needed. The entrance foyer flooring was recently replaced.

The building is used for community and private events.

In a bullet list, include any outbuildings or secondary resources or major landscape features (such as barns, sheds, dam and mill pond, storage tanks, scales, railroad spurs, etc.), including their condition and their estimated construction dates.

- Nonextant well

4. Property's History and Significance (Please do not exceed one page)

Briefly explain the property's historic importance, such as significant events, persons, and/or families associated with the property.

If the property is important for its architecture, engineering, landscape architecture, or other aspects of design, please include a brief explanation of this aspect.

The property, located on New Kent County's main thoroughfare, is a significant reminder of the segregation era where the "colored" schools for African American children were previously sited. The current structure reflects the resilience and foresight of the Cumberland Community Center's founders and supporters, who were dedicated to improving the lives of African American citizens in New Kent County.

The original Cumberland Colored School (Colored School #3) was a one-room school built in 1909 on a half-acre of land on the site, located at the corner of Route 249 and Cumberland/New Elam Road. Built at a cost of \$100.00, it served the African American elementary students east of New Kent Courthouse, going towards West Point until about 1955.

In February 1921, 2 acres of land on the site, which would be the location of the new Cumberland two-room colored school, was purchased by the School Trustees of the Cumberland District from R. W. Taylor and Myra Y. Vaiden for \$150.00.

The new Cumberland Rosenwald Colored two-room school was built in 1928. It was located at the corner of Route 33 and Pamunkey Ferry Road. The total cost was **\$3,399.00**. The Rosenwald Fund provided \$500, the county school board \$2,099, and the local community raised \$800.00. The school had two outdoor privies (toilets), one for boys and one for girls, as well as an outdoor well.

On September 3, 1958, the school and land were sold at auction and purchased by the Trustees, who created the Cumberland Community Center. Three of the original Trustees was Maeco Woodson, Andrew Woodson, and Alpheus Johnson. One of the original carpenters for the community center was Robert Crump, Sr.

Since most facilities remained segregated, the African American community continued to use the school as a safe haven for civic meetings, educational, religious, and recreational activities.

In 1968, the Cumberland 2-room school was burned to the ground by persons never identified or charged with arson.

In 1970, despite death threats, Molotov cocktails, racial slurs and other acts of intimidation, the community rallied using its own resources and constructed the Cumberland Community Center on the site.

- Funds to purchase supplies and construct the center were donated by the original trustees with contributions from the African American community. Despite their modest or meager means, they sacrificed money, time, materials and labor to build the Cumberland Community Center.
- The Cumberland Community Center (CCC) is built on the same parcel of land as the preexisting Rosenwald School, with some overlap due to the CCC's larger dimensions.
- From 1966 - 1968, the African American community in New Kent County faced overt acts of intimidation. Crosses were burned and brush fires were set on or near homes of African Americans resulting in considerable damage and destruction. Mailboxes were destroyed. The

Rosenwald Colored School was completely destroyed by arson. Molotov cocktails were tossed into homeowners' yards and thrown at African American students waiting at the bus stop to attend the New Kent High School during "freedom of choice". No one was ever arrested or charged with these crimes.

- African Americans who conducted business with white citizens were warned that supporting desegregation by sending their children to New Kent High School would result in a loss of business.

Continuing the legacy of the founders and supporters, as in previous years of the Rosenwald School, today the Cumberland Community Center continues to serve as a gathering place for African American citizens of New Kent and surrounding areas. It still hosts family reunions, baby showers, wedding receptions, graduation celebrations, and more.

- The Cumberland Community Center (CCC) and the site itself are a source of keen pride for the long-standing African American residents of New Kent County and their descendants. The Rosenwald School served as the community center once it ceased to be used as a school. The property hosted social events like wedding receptions, baby showers, family reunions, cookouts, and dances. Losing the center to arson was devastating for the community.
- The site continues to host social events, highlighting the historical and cultural importance of the African American community in New Kent County.
- Some of the former students of the Rosenwald Colored School and their children still reside in New Kent and are members of the CCC Association.

Other than churches and private homes, it is the only building for public use in New Kent that is owned by African Americans.

- Yes, there were segregated public meeting places, none of which were owned by African Americans. African Americans generally held their meetings in the various churches.

- Deeds
- The New Kent African American Heritage Society
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Private: X Public\Local Public\State Public\Federal

Date: 02/18/2025


Daytime Telephone: _____


Date: _____

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PIF BOUNDARY MAP

Cumberland Community Center
New Kent County, VA
DHR ID# 063-5159

 Proposed Boundary

0 100 200 300
 Feet



































