

For release Wednesday, Nov. 18, 2009 at
6 p.m.

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Eight Roanoke area sites are endangered

A proposed Southeast industrial district of old buildings, Fire Station No. 7 on Memorial Avenue and the former Downtown Learning Center building lead the 2009 listing of eight endangered sites announced Wednesday night at the annual meeting of the Roanoke Valley Preservation Foundation.

The other five sites:

- Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) plans to remove a 1917 steel truss bridge in the village of Lafayette in Montgomery County
- The 1870s Boaz-Denton house teetering on a hill above U. S. 220 at Daleville
- A vacant Victorian house at 203 Union Street in Salem
- The 1888 Parsonage building on the Hollins University campus
- Scalping of scenic mountain sides—Twelve O’Clock Knob, Dixie Caverns area, Fort Lewis Mountain, Buck Mountain near Clearbrook and Stewart’s Knob, east of Vinton.

Starting in 1996, the preservation organization annually has called public attention to Roanoke area structures or natural resources in danger of removal. The Foundation seeks to make the public aware of the values of restoring and reusing older structures, usually sturdier and often more attractive than newer buildings. The Foundation presents awards in the spring and recognizes endangered sites in the fall.

“This year’s list is particularly disturbing because it contains several buildings that are in use or have recently been in use,” said Foundation board president Mike Kennedy. “To have significant buildings that one year are viable, useful and contributing to the character of their neighborhoods, and slated for destruction the next, is upsetting.”

Vacant industrial buildings, some up to 100 years old, in an area extending from the old Virginia Scrap Iron & Metal Co. on South Jefferson Street northward along the Adams, Payne and Gleaves livery stable, Roanoke Iron & Bridge Works and street car barn to the Heironimus warehouse could be developed as a brownfield site for commercial shops, a restaurant, lofts and cultural events in a Southeast River Industrial District. Festivals. The area is crossed by a greenway and it could be linked by green space parks to the new medical school and other Carilion facilities. Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority has an EPA grant to clean up contaminated soil at the Virginia Scrap Iron and livery stable sites and Carilion Health System has an agreement to buy them. The buildings probably will be razed for other uses, an Authority spokesman said.

City fire officials have expressed interest in replacing the 1922 firehouse on Memorial Avenue for a larger station with a community room and additional facilities—depending on funding. They want to keep the station at that location. The station, a contributing building to the Grandin Road Historic District, was built soon after the

Virginia Heights area was annexed by the city in 1919. It has the influence of Spanish Colonial Revival style combined with early 20th century styles. Among its features are a hipped, tile roof, a large arched opening accented with keystones and contrasting square and diamond brick and stone blocks.

Greene Memorial United Methodist Church plans to raze the 1936 building at the southeast corner of Luck Avenue and Second Street, SW, formerly occupied by the Downtown Learning Center for more than 13 years. Church officials said the building has been damaged by flooding because a drain is too small to take water running from the nearby Poff Federal Building and the city has no plans to solve the problem. The building, the longtime home of the Camera Shop, has a streamlined deco facade. It is one of the few remaining Art Deco buildings remaining in the city. The church plans to use the site for parking.

The single-span, pin-connected, Camelback thru-truss bridge originally was constructed near Newport in 1917 in Giles County but it was moved to Lafayette in 1958. The State Department of Historic Resources has determined the bridge is not eligible for listing on the Virginia Landmarks Register. It is a half-block from the Lafayette historic district. Historic steel truss bridges are increasingly rare. Each old truss bridge is a record of engineering and transportation from a time period.

The brick house at Daleville was built by Theodore Denton, a farmer and fruit grower, in the 1870s and remained in the family well into the 20th century as the home of the Rev. Roy and Sarah Denton Boaz. A developer recently remodeled the house for a restaurant but that business chose another location. The developer also made an unsightly cut next to the house for another commercial project but that has been delayed. The site has historical value. Immediately behind this house was the home of Robert Breckinridge, where the first Botetourt County court met on Feb. 13, 1770.

The vacant family home of the Frank S. Hester heirs on Union Street in Salem appears to be neglected. The two-story Victorian, frame house with a gable was built in 1891.

A Hollins University spokeswoman said the school has no immediate plans for the 1888 I-form house with molded clapboards, inner chimneys and a front gable. It was constructed as a parsonage for the pastor of Enon Baptist Church, across the highway from the campus. Hollins bought the house in 1923 when the church built a parsonage and the building was converted into faculty apartments and later studios and art work rooms.

Some of the clear-cutting and other timbering of Roanoke Valley mountain slopes has threatened several viewsheds. Other negative impacts on mountain viewscapes have come from power line maintenance, cell tower construction, logging, bulldozing and housing developments.

