NORTH CAROLINA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE
Office of Archives and History
Department of Natural and Cultural Resources

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Sunset Avenue Public Works Historic District

Rocky Mount, Nash County, NS1593, Listed 04/10/2025
Nomination by Pofue Yang, Richard Grubb & Associates, Inc.
Photographs by Pofue Yang, November 2023, April and June 2024

Rocky Mount Power Plant, south elevation, northwest direction

Sunset Avenue Water Treatment Plan, façade (west) elevation, east direction

OMB Control No. 1024-0018
expiration date 03/31/2026

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 Property

Historic name: Sunset Avenue Public Works Historic District
Other names/site number: _____
Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A

2. Location

Street & number: 1590, 1609, 1619, 1660, and 1701 Sunset Avenue
City or town: Rocky Mount State: NC County: Nash
Not For Publication: N/A Vicinity: N/A

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this ___ 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 ___ 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:

__X_A ___B ___C ___D

Feb. 24, 2025

Signature of certifying official/Title: State Historic Preservation Officer Date

North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural 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

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:	x
Public – Local	x
Public – State	
Public – Federal	

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

Building(s)	
District	x
Site	
Structure	
Object	

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	8	buildings
1	0	sites
5	1	structures
0	0	objects
8	9	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use
Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)
GOVERNMENT: Public Works
RECREATION AND CULTURE: Outdoor Recreation

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)
GOVERNMENT: Public Works
COMMERCE: Business
COMMERCE: Professional
COMMERCE: Restaurant
RECREATION AND CULTURE: Outdoor Recreation

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)
MODERN MOVEMENT: Art Deco
LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS: Classical Revival

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)
Principal exterior materials of the property:

Foundation:	Concrete
Walls:	Brick
	Stucco
	Metal
Roof:	Asphalt
	Metal
Other:	Brick
	Concrete
	Stone
	Metal
	Glass
	Wood

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

The City of Rocky Mount is located in Nash and Edgecombe counties, straddling the county boundary line. The Sunset Avenue Public Works Historic District is roughly 1.4 miles west of the downtown commercial core of Rocky Mount that is bisected by the Nash/Edgecombe line. Irregular in shape, the Sunset Avenue Public Works Historic District occupies approximately 32.23 acres on the east and west sides of Sunset Avenue, a major thoroughfare that leads to the downtown commercial core of Rocky Mount. The district is bounded by the Tar River on the north; Sunset Park on the northeast; vacant parcels, West Thomas Street, and Sunset Avenue on the east; Piedmont Avenue on the south; the right-of-way of the historic Atlantic Coast Line Railroad (ACL) Spring Hope Branch on the southwest; and densely wooded parcels on the west.

The Sunset Avenue Public Works Historic District comprises three primary properties that tell the story of public utilities and public works in Rocky Mount beginning from the early twentieth century to the mid-twentieth century. The district is characterized by its monumental public utility buildings, set in an urban context, that represent the era of localized electric power and water utilities in Rocky Mount. The district illustrates the city's industrial and residential growth, from the early twentieth century through the mid-twentieth century. The Sunset Avenue Public Works Historic District includes three contributing primary resources (two buildings and one site: the Rocky Mount Power Plant, the Sunset Avenue Water Treatment Plant, and City Lake), five contributing secondary resources (five structures), and nine non-contributing secondary resources (eight buildings and one structure). The three contributing primary resources are located along Sunset Avenue and are in proximity to one another.

The period of significance for the district is 1909 to 1971, beginning with the construction of the oldest extant structure (Clear Well Two) in the district and ending with the Sunset Avenue Water Treatment Plant's conversion to a backup water treatment facility for the city. The power plant, built in 1924, was constructed in the Classical Revival style. William C. Olsen, a consulting engineer from Raleigh, North Carolina, designed the power plant. The water treatment plant, also designed by Olsen, was constructed in the Art Deco Style. The Sunset Avenue Water Treatment Plant and City Lake were New Deal-era projects, built in 1935, that were funded by the federal government. The Public Works Administration (PWA) sponsored the construction of the water treatment plant, and the Works Progress Administration (WPA) excavated City Lake.

Narrative Description

Setting

The Sunset Avenue Public Works Historic District is roughly 1.4 miles west of the downtown commercial core of Rocky Mount and immediately north of West Haven Historic District. The district occupies both sides of Sunset Avenue, a major west/east thoroughfare that leads to the downtown commercial core of Rocky Mount. Sunset Avenue travels southeast through the district then turns east at its junction with Piedmont Avenue. On the east side of Sunset Avenue, the district spans north to south from the Tar River to West Thomas Street, and east to the western borders of Sunset Park and two vacant parcels. On the west side of Sunset Avenue, the district spans north to south from the Tar River to Piedmont Avenue and the right-of-way of the ACL Spring Hope Branch Line, and west to the eastern border of three densely wooded parcels. The three contributing primary resources—the Rocky Mount Power Plant, the Sunset Avenue Water Treatment Plant, and City Lake—flank Sunset Avenue and are in proximity to one another. Buildings and public utility-related structures in the district are concentrated in the northern portion of the district, north of the junction of Sunset Avenue and West Thomas Street. City Lake occupies the southern portion of the district. The Sunset Avenue Public Works Historic District has some light vegetation and trees planted along portions of the sidewalk on the west side of Sunset Avenue, in mulch beds around and near the principal buildings, and scattered throughout City Lake Park. East and south of the district are two high-density residential areas—known as Mayo Heights and West Haven—which are generally characterized by single-family houses constructed from the

1920s through the mid-twentieth century. A mid- to late twentieth-century commercial block on the east side of Sunset Avenue, between West Thomas Street and Beal Street, is immediately east of the district. North of the district, across the Tar River, is mid- to late twentieth-century commercial development along Sunset Avenue.

The Rocky Mount Power Plant and City Lake are on the west side of Sunset Avenue and constitute the western portion of the district. The Sunset Avenue Water Treatment Plant is on the east side of Sunset Avenue and constitutes the eastern portion. The power plant stands on the south bank of the Tar River and west of Sunset Avenue, and it has a densely wooded backdrop to the west. City Lake, a 10.5-acre artificial lake that is part of a 26.39-acre municipal park, is south of the power plant. Two clear-water reservoirs sit between the power plant and City Lake. Sunset Avenue and Piedmont Avenue bound the east and south sides of the City Lake Park, respectively. City Lake has a wooded backdrop to the west, which also obscures most of the ACL Spring Hope Branch Line from the City Lake Park. The water treatment plant stands near Sunset Avenue, east of the two clear-water reservoirs. It is part of a 21.9-acre parcel that includes an electrical substation and Sunset Park. River Drive runs northeast from Sunset Avenue and divides the parcel in two. The electrical substation occupies the northwest corner of the parcel, north of River Drive and the water treatment plant occupies the southwest corner, south of River Drive. Not included within the boundaries of the district is Sunset Park, which is a municipal park with recreational facilities lying east of the Sunset Avenue Water Treatment Plant.

Architectural Description and Development of the Sunset Avenue Public Works Historic District

The Sunset Avenue Public Works Historic District is characterized by its monumental public utility buildings set in an urban context that represent the era of electric power and water utilities in Rocky Mount. The district illustrates the city's industrial and residential growth and imprint of federal Depression-era relief programs from the early twentieth century through the mid-twentieth century. In response to drastic residential growth in the 1890s and 1900s, the city acquired land in 1908 at what would later be the site of the Rocky Mount Power Plant and Sunset Avenue Water Treatment Plant to build a new electric power and water plant.[1] Construction of the Municipal Water Works and Electric Light Plant (gone), an industrial building that housed the city's electric light plant and water works, was completed in 1909 at the site immediately south of what would later be the Rocky Mount Power Plant. A 0.5-million-gallon clear-water reservoir (Clear Well Two), south of the 1909 Municipal Water Works and Electric Light Plant, was built around the same time. Circa 1922, a 1.5-million-gallon clear-water reservoir (Clear Well One) was built to the south of Clear Well Two.[2]

[1] Nash County Register of Deeds, September 16, 1908, Deed Book 174, p. 16.
[2] According to Jim Connolly, the superintendent of Rocky Mount's Water Treatment division, the current name for the 0.5-million-gallon clear-water reservoir is "Clear Well Two," while the 1.5-million-gallon clear-water reservoir is "Clear Well One." Jim Connolly, personal interview with Pofue Yang at the Sunset Avenue Water Treatment Plant, April 9, 2024. Sanborn maps show that the 0.5-million-gallon reservoir (Clear Well Two) was built before the 1.5-million-gallon reservoir (Clear Well One).

Funded by federal money, public utility buildings in the district were built and expanded in response to increasing electricity and water consumption in Rocky Mount. Electricity consumption continued to grow in the 1910s and 1920s, prompting the city to build a new power plant facility immediately north of the 1909 Municipal Water Works and Electric Light Plant. The three-story, Classical Revival-style Rocky Mount Power Plant was built in 1924 and was the third municipal electric power plant in Rocky Mount. The Sunset Avenue Water Treatment Plant was built in 1935 across Sunset Avenue, east of the two clear-water reservoirs, to replace the outdated 1909 Municipal Water Works and Electric Light Plant. The three-story Sunset Avenue Water Treatment Plant was constructed in the Art Deco style, a popular architectural style for PWA-sponsored buildings throughout the United States. City Lake, a roughly 10.5-acre artificial lake south of the two clear-water reservoirs, was excavated by the WPA in 1935, and a park was developed around it, which included cultivated shrubbery, a drive around the lake, and a wooded area south of the lake.

Residential and industrial growth in Rocky Mount continued through the early and mid-twentieth century. As a result, the Rocky Mount Power Plant was expanded in 1938 and 1949, and the Sunset Avenue Water Treatment Plant was expanded in 1941 and 1956 to accommodate new and additional equipment. By 1941, the 1909 Municipal Water Works and Electric Light Plant was demolished because it was obsolete.[3] The most substantial expansion to the power plant was in 1949, which expanded its footprint and raised the western section of the power plant to five stories. In 1941 and 1956, additional filter rooms and basins were built to the rear (east) of the water treatment plant. The two clear-water reservoirs, which were originally uncovered, were covered with concrete-slab caps in 1938 to satisfy state regulations on water reservoirs.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the three primary resources underwent alterations. The Rocky Mount Power Plant ceased operation in 1963 and sat vacant until 1985. The city sold the power plant to The Power Company (a property management company) in 1985, and the building's exterior has experienced material alterations since then. Its interior has been reconfigured for its present commercial use as offices and a restaurant. Additional water treatment-related buildings and structures were built around the Sunset Avenue Water Treatment Plant in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and the water treatment plant underwent some alterations to its exterior materials. The floor plan and interior material and ornamentation of the water treatment plant is intact.[4] The water treatment plant continues to function as a municipal water plant. From 1991 to 1992, City Lake underwent a city beautification project with additional recreational structures—including a gazebo, boardwalks, metal artwork and sculptures, and benches—built at the site, and it continues to function as a municipal park. Both the power plant and water treatment plant have had some exterior material alterations, namely window replacements; however, their massing, brick veneer, and exterior ornamentation remain intact.

[3] L. B. Aycock, "City Manager Gives Review Of 1941 City Improvements," *Evening Telegram* (Rocky Mount, NC), January 1, 1942, 1B.
[4] Paul J. Dishner, "Complete Treatment Provided at Rocky Mount, N. C., Plant," *The Journal of the Water Works Profession Since 1877* 89, no. 5 (1936).

Inventory List

Key

The inventory list for the Sunset Avenue Public Works Historic District is based on a 2024 survey conducted by Richard Grubb & Associates, Inc. The 2024 survey resulted in the identification of three contributing primary resources (two buildings and one site), five contributing secondary resources (five structures), and nine non-contributing secondary resources (eight buildings and one structure).

The inventory is arranged alphabetically by street name and numerically by address number along each street. Each resource has a heading that identifies the resource number, address, primary and secondary (where applicable) resource name, date(s) of construction, contributing status, and resource type (building, site, structure, or object). Following the heading is a description of the primary resource that includes information regarding the resource's form, height, style, construction material/method, exterior wall finish, and roof form and material. Secondary resources are given a heading under the associated primary resource, and their descriptions are generally brief. When applicable, sources are included in the description in brackets.

Whenever possible, resources are named for their initial and/or long-term use. Construction dates are either exact or approximate. Circa dates were narrowed down by various historic sources including newspaper articles, historic maps, historic aerial and ground photographs, stylistic clues, and other published sources. Secondary resources tend to have more approximate construction dates. The superintendent of Rocky Mount's Water Treatment division, Jim Connolly, provided the names and construction dates of the Sunset Avenue Water Treatment Plant's secondary resources.[5]

Contributing status indicates the status of the resource as either contributing (C) or non-contributing (NC) to the historic character of the Sunset Avenue Public Works Historic District. Resources within the district are considered contributing if they were built during the district's period of significance (1909–1971) and retain sufficient integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association to contribute to the historic character of the district. Common changes within the Sunset Avenue Public Works Historic District include additions to buildings, the construction of ancillary buildings and structures, and the replacement of windows and doors. These changes alone or in combination with one another do not typically render a property non-contributing if the property's significant form, features, and detailing are not obscured. Replacement windows and doors do not render a property non-contributing if the original fenestration patterns are intact. All nine non-contributing resources are non-contributing because they are under 50 years of age.

[5] Jim Connolly, email message to Pofue Yang, June 28, 2024.

Inventory List

SUNSET AVENUE

1. 1609 Sunset Avenue – City Lake – ca. 1935, 1991–1992 Contributing Site

The Works Progress Administration excavated City Lake around 1935. City Lake is a 10.5-acre, keyhole-shaped artificial lake with two islands. The lake is part of a 26.39-acre municipal park. Two concrete-capped clear-water reservoirs (Clear Well One and Clear Well Two) are within the parcel at the northeast corner, though they are associated with the Sunset Avenue Water Treatment Plant. Southeast of the lake is a grassy area with mature pine trees and a variety of hardwood trees. Metal artwork, metal sculptures, and benches dot the property. According to a United States Department of Agriculture historic aerial photograph, the shape of City Lake has remained unchanged since at least 1940 [USDA 1940].

A .37-acre, figure-eight-shaped island (pedestrian island) with a hexagonal gazebo, concrete paths, and planted trees and shrubs is located near the southern bank of City Lake. A wood pedestrian bridge leads from the lake's south bank to the island. A smaller, irregular-shaped, densely vegetated island is northwest of the pedestrian island and is inaccessible. The irregular-shaped island originally had a circular shape until 1991 [NETR Online]. North of the pedestrian island is a multi-spray water fountain. Two boardwalks occupy a section of the southwest and northwest banks. A concrete pedestrian walkway encircles the lake. The pedestrian island and its components, wood bridge, water fountain, piers, and concrete walkway were constructed in 1991–1992 as part of the city's beautification project. The artwork, sculptures, and benches throughout the property are 1990s and twenty-first-century additions.

City Lake was the subject of a city beautification project in 1991–1992, which was conducted in three major phases: (1) the relocation of Lake Drive which circles the lake, expanding areas for pedestrians and bicyclists, and adding parking spaces; (2) the enlargement of an existing island and construction of a new island; (3) the installation of a new multi-spray fountain, boardwalks, a gazebo, and an island trail.

2. 1660 Sunset Avenue – Sunset Avenue Water Treatment Plant – 1935, 1941, 1956, 1994 Contributing Building

Built in 1935 and later expanded in 1941, 1956, and 1994, the Art Deco-style Sunset Avenue Water Treatment Plant faces roughly west toward Sunset Avenue. The building consists of four sections: (1) the 1935 original block that is comprised of a three-story head house, three-story flanking wings, and a two-story rear filter room and subsidence basin; (2) the 1941 filter room and subsidence basin along the west side of the original filter room and basin; (3) the 1956 filter room and subsidence basin along the north side of the 1941 filter room and basin; (4) and the 1994 ozone contact chamber at the southeast corner of the original subsidence basin. Other changes around 1991 included the renovation of the interior and machinery, replacement in-kind of the copper roof, and replacement of all windows. Some windows were replaced in-kind. The Sunset Avenue Water Treatment Plant building is part of a complex of water treatment-related buildings and structures at the site. To the rear (east) and south of the building are an array of non-historic, water treatment-related buildings and structures. A metal fence encloses a section of the south and east sides of the complex, and a chain-link fence encloses the northeast side of the property. Across Sunset Avenue, west of the water treatment plant, are two low, covered, clear-water reservoirs (Clear Well One and Two).

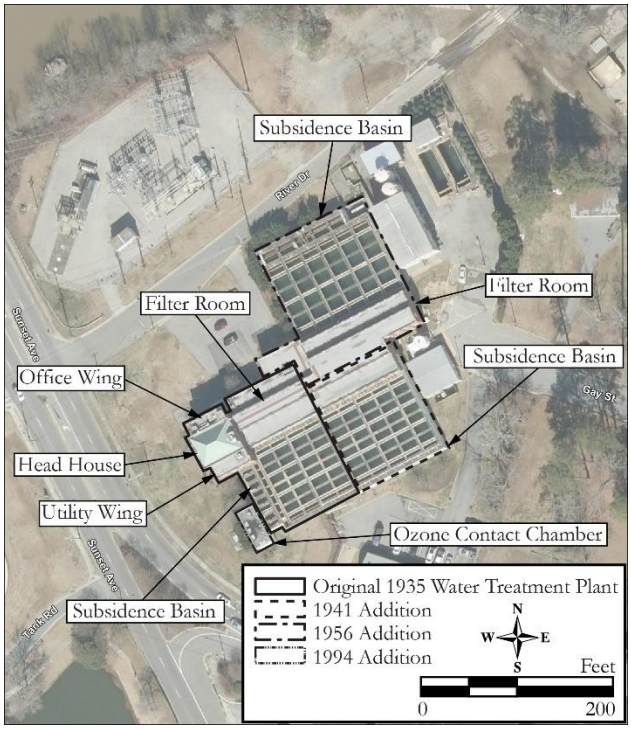


Figure 1. Evolution of the Sunset Avenue Water Treatment Plant building (NC OneMap 2024).

The 1935 original Art Deco block of the water treatment plant sits on a concrete foundation with a low, concrete water table and features brick-veneered exterior walls and limestone copings. The brick veneer is executed in running bond with a course of alternating header and stretcher at every sixth course. The three-story head house has a projecting center bay with a triangulated parapet, which slightly obscures the hipped copper roof. The roof was replaced in-kind circa 1991. The center bay has a metal-framed, glazed double door with a multi-light transom and a smooth stone veneer surround, reminiscent of smooth wall surfaces commonly found on Art Deco-style buildings, with chamfered cornice and dentils. Art Deco-style lanterns on decorative corbels flank the entry. Steps lead up to a concrete pad in front of the entry. All windows were replaced around 1991. Above the entry are paired second- and third-floor replacement windows. The second-floor windows are eight-over-eight, metal-sash windows with soldier-course lintels; these window openings originally contained eight-light pivot sashes with four lights above and below the pivot sash. The third-floor windows are twelve-over-eight with concrete sills; these window openings originally contained eight-light pivot sashes with eight lights above and four lights below the pivot

sash. Windows on the north and south side elevations of the head house consist of replacement six-over-six and six-light windows; these window openings may have originally contained pivot sashes. A concrete belt course runs across the façade above the third-floor windows. Brick pilasters, flanking the projecting center bay, rise from the water table and terminate above the concrete belt course. A chamfered concrete cap and a vertically oriented concrete block projects from the top of the pilasters. Below the triangulated parapet is a hexagonal stone inset. On either side of the center bay is a tall, rectangular, recessed brick panel that rises from a point several feet above the water table to the concrete belt course. The brick veneer on the main block extends vertically past the roofline, forming a continuous parapet and giving the appearance of a flat roof. Concrete coping caps the parapet. The pilasters, brick panels, and parapets give the building a vertical emphasis. Geometric features such as the pilaster caps, hexagonal stone inset, triangular parapet, limestone copings, and decorative brickwork emphasize the building's blocky and geometric form. These architectural elements are characteristic of the Art Deco style.

The architectural style and materials of the north-side (office) and south-side (utility) wings match the main block. All windows on the wings were replaced in-kind or replaced around 1991. Fenestration on the wings includes tall, twelve-over-twenty-over-twelve, metal-sash replacement windows that rise from the first floor to the second floor; each tall window opening originally contained three eight-light pivot sashes with fixed lights above and below each pivot sash. Third-floor windows consist of replaced in-kind eight-light pivot windows with four horizontally oriented lights above and below the pivot sash, and twelve-light, fixed-sash replacement windows. All windows have concrete sills and brick soldier-course lintels. The west elevation of each wing, fronting Sunset Avenue, features a tall window and a third-floor fixed square window. The north elevation of the office wing features three tall windows and three third-floor pivot windows. Four brick pilasters, which divide the north elevation of the office wing into three sections, rise from the water table and terminate above the roof line. A vertically oriented concrete block tops each pilaster. A course of rowlock brick tops each bay. The south elevation of the utility wing features four brick pilasters and pivot windows on all three floors. The pilasters and tall windows on the wings contribute to the building's vertical emphasis.

The 1935 two-story filter room is eight bays deep and has a multi-plane flat roof. The south section of the filter room has a shorter roof line than the north section. The filter room features brick pilasters and pivot windows identical to those in the wings. The 1935 subsidence basin, which is subdivided into multiple basins laid out in a grid pattern, is one story tall and covered with light-colored stucco. Recessed arches ornament the front and side elevations of the basin. A 1994 ozone contact chamber, taller than the basin, runs along a portion of the basin's west elevation and projects southward. The north elevation of the filter room features six brick pilasters, four tall windows, and two pivot windows identical to the wings. Three of the tall windows have rectangular vents that replaced the upper sashes. Nestled between the filter room and the office wing is a brick-veneered, four-story tower that was constructed after 1956. A metal canopy shelters a raised concrete loading dock and side entry on the north side of the tower. The 1941 and 1956 filter rooms and basins are identical to the original filter room and basin. The 1941 filter room, located along the west side of the 1935 filter room and basin, is 10 bays deep. The 1956 filter room, located along the north side of the 1941 filter room and basin, is 12 bays deep.

a. Clear Well Two – ca. 1909
Contributing Structure
This clear-water reservoir is located on the opposite side of Sunset Avenue from the water treatment plant. The reservoir is roughly 80 feet in diameter and has a capacity of 0.5 million gallons. It is constructed of reinforced concrete and has a concrete-slab cap which slightly rises toward the center. This reservoir was originally uncovered; the cap was added in 1938. Though it is named "Clear Well Two" by Rocky Mount's Water Treatment division, this reservoir was built before Clear Well One.

b. Clear Well One – ca. 1922
Contributing Structure
This clear-water reservoir is located on the opposite side of Sunset Avenue from the water treatment plant. It stands south of Clear Well Two and is similar in construction to Clear Well Two. Clear Well One is 120 feet in diameter and has a capacity of 1.5 million gallons. Though it is named "Clear Well One" by Rocky Mount's Water Treatment division because it is the largest of the two reservoirs, this reservoir was built after Clear Well Two.

c. Water Intake – ca. 1955
Contributing Structure
This water intake is in the Tar River near the southern riverbank to the north of the water treatment plant. It is constructed of concrete and has a hexagonal form and flat roof. On each side is a rectangular metal grate. South of the water intake is a circa-1935 remnant of an abandoned intake structure.

d. Pumped Water Meter Vault – ca. 1955
Contributing Structure
This pumped water meter vault is north of the water treatment plant. It is a low, concrete structure with a rectangular form and a flat cap. Rectangular openings light its west and east elevations.

e. Chlorine/Bleach Building – ca. 1989
Non-Contributing Building (Age)
This chlorine/bleach building is northwest of the water treatment plant. The one-story, brick-veneered building has a rectangular form and a shed metal roof. The building sits on a high concrete foundation and features tall windows, mechanical equipment, metal double doors, and vents.

f. Bulk Chemical Building – ca. 1989
Non-Contributing Building (Age)
This bulk chemical building is west of the water treatment plant's 1956 section. The two-story, metal-sided building has a rectangular form and a low-pitched gabled roof. The building sits on a high concrete foundation and features metal doors, roll-up metal doors, and vents.

g. Spray Park Building – ca. 1989
Non-Contributing Building (Age)
This spray park building is at the eastern perimeter of the water treatment plant complex, west of the water treatment plant. The one-story, metal-sided building has a rectangular form, roll-up garage doors, a pedestrian door, and a flat roof.

h. Sludge Tanks – ca. 1990
Non-Contributing Structure (Age)
The sludge tanks are two cylindrical tanks standing between the chlorine/bleach building and the bulk chemical building.

i. Trac Vac Building and Basin – ca. 1990
Non-Contributing Building (Age)
This trac vac building and basin is west of the chlorine/bleach building and sludge tanks. The one-story, metal-sided building has a rectangular form and a low-pitched gabled roof. To the south of the building are two basins.

j. Ozone Generation Building – ca. 1994
Non-Contributing Building (Age)
This ozone generation building is near the west side of the water treatment plant's 1941 section. The one-story, metal-sided building has a rectangular form and a low-pitched gabled roof. It sits on a concrete foundation and features double doors, a single door, and vents.

k. Maintenance and Training Shop – ca. 2001
Non-Contributing Building (Age)
This maintenance and training shop is south of the water treatment plant. The one-story, masonry-veneered building has a rectangular form and a side-gabled metal roof. It has a regular-coursed stone veneer on the bottom section of the wall and a stuccoed top section. Fenestration includes doors with single lights, single-light fixed windows, a roll-up garage door, and skylights.

l. Lime Slurry Tank and Pumping Station – ca. 2011
Non-Contributing Building (Age)
This lime slurry tank and pumping station consists of a cylindrical tank with a metal-sided, shed-roofed pumping station attached to its west side. This tank and pumping station is north of the ozone generation building.

3. 1701 Sunset Avenue – Rocky Mount Power Plant – 1924, 1938, 1949 Contributing Building

Built in 1924 and later expanded in 1938 and 1949, the Classical Revival-style Rocky Mount Power Plant faces roughly south toward City Lake. The building's original north façade (facing the Tar River) is highly visible to vehicular traffic traveling south on Sunset Avenue, giving the building essentially two "fronts." Its brick chimney stack is a highly visible landmark throughout the district. The building consists of three sections built in 1924, 1938, and 1949. William C. Olsen's design of the 1924 section is best reflected on the north elevation, whereas the south elevation juxtaposes the design of the 1924 building with the substantial expansion of the facility that took place in 1949. Changes since 1985 included the renovation and reconfiguration of the interior, removal of machinery, construction of fire escape stairwells, and replacement of all windows.

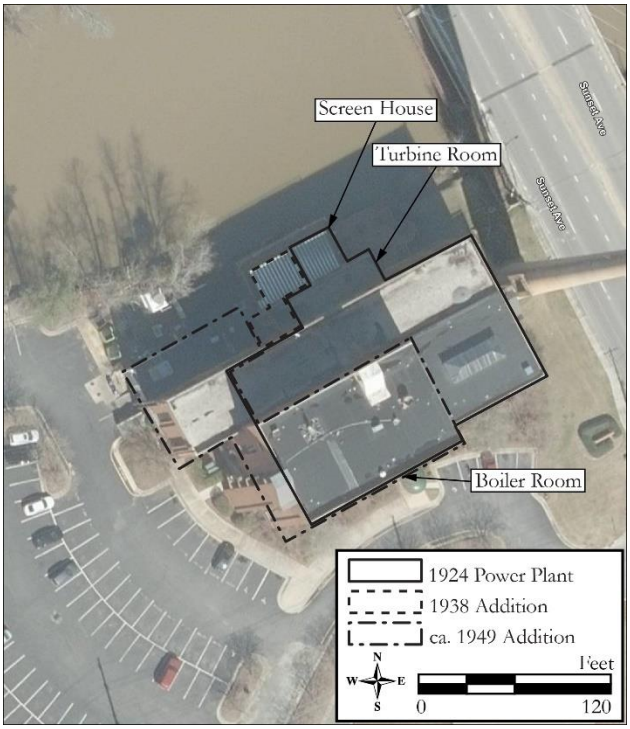


Figure 2. Evolution of the Rocky Mount Power Plant building (NC OneMap 2024).

The 1924 main block is a brick-veneered, flat-roofed building with Classical Revival-style detailing. The brick exterior is executed in five-to-one common bond. The main block is eight bays wide, six bays deep, and three stories tall. The southwestern section (boiler room) of the main block was elevated to five stories in 1949. The 1924 two-story turbine room and 1924 one-story screen house project from the north side of the main block. The building has undergone three substantial renovations: in 1938 when two small additions were added to the west side of the two-story turbine room and one-story screen house on the north side of the main block; in 1946–1949 when the northwest corner of the main block was expanded west and the southwest corner of the main block was raised five stories; and in 1985 when the building was converted to commercial use. A large, cylindrical, header-bond brick chimney, likely built around the same time as the 1924 main block, sits to the east of the building. Classical Revival-style features on the main block include the five-to-one common bond brick exterior, concrete water table, windows with jack arches and keystones, brickwork around the windows, and corbelled cornices.

The 1924 main block sits on a concrete foundation with a high, concrete water table. The main block's north and east elevations feature a concrete belt course with a soldier course of brick above that divides the first- and second-floor windows. A corbelled brick belt course, with a brick soldier course below and a concrete cap above, runs above the second-floor windows on the north, east, and south elevations of the main block and terminates at the five-story boiler room. The corbelled

belt course gives the effect of a cornice. The first-floor windows on the north and east elevations of the 1924 main block are fixed, two-light, rectangular replacement windows. The second-floor windows on the north and east elevations are tall, fixed, six-light, rectangular replacement windows. The third-floor windows on the south elevation of the 1924 main block are large, six-pane, rectangular replacement windows. All windows have thick metal muntins, metal sashes, concrete sills, jack arches, and concrete keystones. The original multi-light pivot windows were replaced with the current windows around 1985 [Olsen 1924 and 1938]. The window openings, however, remain intact. The brickwork around each second-floor window on the north and east elevations is slightly recessed, giving the effect of pilasters between the windows. The brick exterior on the first and second story of the 1924 main block's south elevation was stuccoed circa 1985, covering what may have been a first-floor window opening at the east end of the south elevation [NS1183 Survey File]. A three-story exterior stairwell, constructed circa 1985, rises along the east elevation.

In 1946–1949, the southwestern section (boiler room) of the main block was expanded west and raised to five stories to accommodate a new boiler. The flat-roofed, five-story boiler room features five-to-one common-bond brick veneer. Ornamentation on the exterior of the boiler room is simpler than the remainder of the main block, but the boiler room still has recessed brickwork, a concrete belt course, concrete windowsills, and pilasters. These features are simplified examples of Classical Revival features found on the remainder of the 1924 main block. Fenestration on the south and west elevations of the five-story boiler room include modern, metal-framed doors; tall, five- and seven-light, vertically oriented, metal-sash replacement windows; and fixed-sash replacement windows. The replacement window sashes were installed around 1985, replacing the boiler room's historic multi-light window sashes around 1985 [NS1183 Survey File]. The window openings, however, remain intact. On the east elevation of the five-story boiler room, overlooking the main block's three-story eastern section, is a glazed wall that was added sometime after 1985. A canopy shelters the main entrance on the boiler room's south elevation. A five-story exterior stairwell, constructed circa 1985, rises along the west elevation.

On the north side of the main block are two 1924 projections: a projecting two-story, six-bay-wide, two-bay-deep turbine room fronted by a one-story, seven-bay-wide, four-bay-deep screen house. The turbine room is lower than the main block, revealing parts of the upper section of the recessed brickwork on the main block's north elevation. According to the 1938 architectural drawings, the turbine room and screen house were originally three bays wide. In 1938, a three-bay addition was added to the turbine room's west side and a four-bay addition was added to the screen house's west side [Olsen 1938]. The architectural style and materials of the turbine room and screen house match the main block. The concrete water table and the concrete chamfered belt course on the main block continue onto the turbine room. A corbelled brick cornice with a concrete coping caps the flat-roofed turbine room. Fenestration on the turbine room is composed of modern, metal-framed doors and one-over-one, metal-sash replacement windows. Above each second-floor window are two soldier courses with decorative square, concrete blocks. The flat-roofed screen house slightly projects out over the bank of the Tar River. The screen house sits on a high concrete foundation. Fenestration includes modern, metal-framed doors and square, single-light replacement windows. All windows on the turbine room and screen house have concrete sills,

soldier course lintels, and concrete keystones. The windows are second-generation replacements [NS1183 Survey File]. The original windows were multi-light, fixed sashes that were replaced with multi-light pivot sashes by 1975. The pivot sashes were replaced with the current sashes around 1985. A tunnel-like opening in the foundation of the screen house contains a pipe, which may have functioned as an intake pipe that drew water from the Tar River to the screen house. Sitting on top of the screen house is a shed-roofed patio with window walls used by a restaurant tenant. Metal railings enclose the patio. Nestled on the east side of the turbine room and screen house is a first-floor patio. The two patios are not original to the turbine room and screen house. They were likely added sometime after 1985.

A three-story, three-bay-wide, two-bay-deep addition was added to the northwest corner of the 1924 main block around 1949. The architectural style and materials of its north elevation match the 1924 main block. It features three second-floor windows. The two recessed brickwork around the windows on the addition's north elevation are wider than those on the 1924 main block's north elevation. The architectural style on the west and south elevations matches that of the five-story boiler room.

A one-story, shed-roofed, stuccoed addition, built around 1949, is against the north side of the 1949 three-story addition at the northwest corner of the main block. Mechanical equipment pierces the roof.

a. Electrical Substation – 1938, ca. 1961
Contributing Structure
This electrical substation is east of the Power Plant, across Sunset Avenue. The perimeter is fenced in with a chain-link fence, and the ground is covered with gravel. The western section of the substation, established in 1938 by the City of Rocky Mount, is the oldest section. The eastern section was established in 1961 by the Carolina Power & Light Company.

b. Shed – ca. 2010
Non-Contributing Building (Age)
This front-gabled shed is north of the one-story stuccoed addition at the northwest corner of the Power Plant, and it faces west. The shed has vertical board siding and a paneled door on its primary (west) elevation.

Integrity Statement

The Sunset Avenue Public Works Historic District retains integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The district retains integrity of location since its primary resources—the Rocky Mount Power Plant, Sunset Avenue Water Treatment Plant, and City Lake—remain on their original sites. The district's setting is defined by its monumental public utility buildings set in an urban context on either side of Sunset Avenue. The immediate setting has evolved over time and has experienced some diminution of integrity, particularly with the construction of modern ancillary structures and buildings adjacent to the Sunset Avenue Water Treatment Plant. The primary resources, however, maintain their spatial relationships to one another because they have not been moved and have not been substantially expanded since the period of significance (1909–1971). The larger setting of early-twentieth-century residential neighborhoods, mid-twentieth-century commercial blocks, and the Tar River are present. For these reasons, the district has integrity of setting.

Although the primary resources have undergone varying degrees of exterior alterations since the 1980s, the district maintains its overall historic character. The most visible change to the exterior of the Rocky Mount Power Plant and Sunset Avenue Water Treatment Plant are the replacement windows; however, the original fenestration patterns remain. Material renovations that post-date the district's period of significance somewhat diminish the buildings' integrity of design and materials; however, they do not obscure the buildings' significant form, features, and detailing. The buildings retain their overall form that identifies them as public utility buildings. The Rocky Mount Power Plant maintains its blocky form which housed the boilers, turbines, and other machinery. Additionally, its tall smokestack remains. The power plant's machinery was removed when the building was converted to commercial use. The Sunset Avenue Water Treatment Plant maintains its form, including the head house, wings, rear operating floor, and exterior subsidence basins. The expansions of the Rocky Mount Power Plant in 1938 and 1949 and the Sunset Avenue Water Treatment Plant in 1941 and 1956 fall within the period of significance. These expansions are discernable from the original part of each building. City Lake maintains its original shape. Landscaping such as vegetation and furnishings around City Lake has changed, but landscaping is not stable and is always changing.

As evident in surviving drawings by Olsen and historic photographs by the PWA, the overall Classical Revival design of the Rocky Mount Power Plant and Art Deco design of the Sunset Avenue Water Treatment Plant are retained. The Rocky Mount Power Plant's Classical Revival features are present, including its symmetry on the north and east elevations, brickwork, window surround, belt courses, and corbelled cornice. The Sunset Avenue Water Treatment Plant maintains its Art Deco characteristics, such as its vertical emphasis, fenestration pattern, pilasters, geometric ornamentation, brickwork, and blocky form. For these reasons, the district has integrity of design, materials, and workmanship.

The district conveys its historical associations with public utilities and New Deal-era public work programs in the City of Rocky Mount through its continued use in the areas of recreation and water treatment. The Rocky Mount Power Plant and Sunset Avenue Water Treatment Plant maintain

their industrial feeling with their monumental scale and the presence of electric power and water treatment-related structures and buildings. City Lake remains a park. For these reasons, the district has integrity of feeling and association.

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.)

- [x] 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

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions.)
Community Planning and Development
Engineering

Period of Significance
1909–1971

Significant Dates
1924
1935
1949

Significant Person
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)
N/A

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Architect/Builder
Olsen, William C., Consulting Engineer

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 Sunset Avenue Public Works Historic District is significant at the local level under Criterion A in the areas of Community Planning and Development and Engineering. The period of significance begins in 1909 with the construction of Clear Well Two, the earliest extant resource within the district, and ends in 1971 when the Sunset Avenue Water Treatment Plant became a backup water treatment facility for the city. The district served as the historic electric power and water utilities core of the City of Rocky Mount from 1909 to 1971. The district illustrates the city's industrial and residential growth from the early twentieth century to its last quarter. It reflects early and mid-twentieth century advances in technology and engineering related to power generation and water treatment. Rocky Mount's population growth from 8,051 in 1910 to 21,412 in 1930 resulted in increased electric power and water consumption in the city. The population growth was indicative of the city's prospering railroad hub, and the successful tobacco and textile industries in the early twentieth century that attracted employees and their families to the city. The Rocky Mount Power Plant and the Sunset Avenue Water Treatment Plant were built in response to increased electric power and water consumption resulting from the city's growth. Suburban neighborhoods established in the 1900s, such as Villa Place and Falls Road, experienced a resurgence in housing development in the 1920s. Newer neighborhoods, such as Edgemont and West Haven, were established in the 1910s and 1920s. Housing development in and around Rocky Mount continued through the mid-twentieth century. The power plant and water treatment plant were subsequently expanded in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s to provide more electric power to the growing City of Rocky Mount.

The district also illustrates the imprint of federal Depression-era relief programs in Rocky Mount. Federal programs such as the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), Public Works Administration (PWA), and Works Progress Administration (WPA), provided direct relief to state and local governments and/or jobs through public work projects. In Rocky Mount, FERA funds were used for a variety of projects, including infrastructure repair and construction, landscaping, water and sewer line installation, school repair and construction, and food and commodity distribution. The Sunset Avenue Water Treatment Plant was financed by the PWA, and City Lake was excavated by WPA workers.[6] The water treatment plant and City Lake are surviving examples of federal Depression-era projects in Rocky Mount that remain in use.

[6] J. S. Kirk, Walter A. Cutter, and Thomas W. Morse, eds., *Emergency Relief in North Carolina: A Record of the Development and the Activities of the North Carolina Emergency Relief Administration, 1932–1935* (Raleigh, NC: Edwards & Broughton Company, 1936), 476.

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

History of Rocky Mount Water Works and Electric Power, and Community Planning and Development Context

Rocky Mount was incorporated as a town in 1867 and as a city in 1907. It is referred to as "Town of Rocky Mount" or "the town" in this document when narrating the history of the city prior to 1907, and as "City of Rocky Mount" or "the city" elsewhere in this document.

Early Public Water Systems and Electric Power Plants in North Carolina

The earliest public water systems in North Carolina towns were established in the late eighteenth century to serve as a water supply for residents without private wells. Municipalities also used water systems to fight fires.[7] In the mid- and late nineteenth century, medical research discovered that microorganisms were responsible for many intestinal infections and diseases. This led to the conclusion that clean water reduced intestinal diseases such as typhoid and diphtheria. From the late nineteenth to early twentieth century, communities across North Carolina constructed water filtration plants because of these scientific advances. By 1888, 12 municipalities had water supply systems.[8] Most of these water systems were owned by private water companies.[9]

Though the first electric power plant in North Carolina was established in 1881 at a factory in Salem, North Carolina, access to electric power in the state remained limited until the 1930s and 1940s when the Rural Electrification Administration brought power to rural areas.[10] From the late nineteenth century through the early twentieth century, most electric power usage in North Carolina was in cities and industrial areas.

Early Water Systems and Electric Power in Rocky Mount, 1880s to 1908

Rocky Mount grew along the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad (later named the ACL), which straddled the border of Nash and Edgecombe counties. The railroad was completed in 1840 and ran from Wilmington to Weldon, North Carolina. The expansion of the local tobacco market in the late 1880s and the establishment of the ACL repair shops in Rocky Mount in the early 1890s

[7] David H. Howells, "Historical Account of Public Water Supplies in North Carolina," Report No. 244 of the Water Resources Research Institute of The University of North Carolina (1989), 1.
[8] Asheville, Charlotte, Concord, Durham, Fayetteville, Goldsboro, Greensboro, Raleigh, Salem, Salisbury, Wilmington, and Winston.
[9] Howells, "Historical Account of Public Water Supplies," 7–10.
[10] Beth Pearsall, "Rocky Mount Electric Power Plant," National Register of Historic Places Inventory – Nomination Form (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1982), Section 8, p.1.

attracted a variety of commercial concerns, resulting in the town's geographic and commercial growth. The town's population of 357 in 1870 grew to 816 by 1890.[11]

Prior to the turn of the twentieth century, Rocky Mount did not have a municipally owned power or water plant. Electric lights and running water were introduced to Rocky Mount as early as 1889 and 1896; however, those utilities were privately owned and used for industry. In 1889, Rocky Mount Mills (NRHP listed, 1980), a cotton mill at the falls of the Tar River roughly 1.3 miles northwest of Rocky Mount's downtown commercial core, installed a water turbine and generator to power its mill machinery and to light its mill buildings. By the end of 1896, its mill village had running water.[12] In south Rocky Mount, the ACL had a small steam-electric generation station that supplied electric lighting for its roadhouses and repair shops. Meanwhile, most Rocky Mount residents relied on coal gas and kerosene lamps to light their homes and cisterns and wells for water.[13]

The first public utility established in Rocky Mount was water service in 1900, followed by electric lights in 1901. In 1899, Rocky Mount acquired land on Stony Creek at what is now 521 Country Club Road, about 3 miles northwest of Rocky Mount, and built a water pumping station there in early 1900. The first municipal electric power plant in Rocky Mount, the Rocky Mount Electric Power Plant (NRHP listed, 1982), was built in 1901 at what is now 533 South Franklin Street, just southwest of the downtown commercial core.[14]

Rocky Mount's population dramatically increased in the first decade of the twentieth century, resulting in increased demand for electric power and water service. The town's population of 816 in 1890 grew to 2,937 in 1900.[15] By 1910, the population had grown to 8,051, a tenfold increase since 1890.[16] This dramatic population growth within a span of 20 years was in part a result of the rapid expansion of the ACL's railroad shops in south Rocky Mount and the town's growing tobacco market, both of which attracted professionals and laborers to the city.

In 1907, the city's Board of Commissioners authorized the construction of a new water and power plant to replace the 1900 water pumping station and 1901 electric power plant. The board contracted with F. D. Milstead, a consulting engineer, to design a new building to house both a power plant and water treatment plant. The following year, the city acquired land along Stony Creek Road (now Sunset Avenue) at the Tar River for the construction of a new water and power

[11] Heather Fearnbach, "Rocky Mount Central City Historic District Boundary Increase and Decrease and Additional Documentation," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2009), Section 8, p. 74.
[12] Bill Beck, *A Century of Service: City of Rocky Mount Public Utilities* (Rocky Mount, NC: City of Rocky Mount, 2002), 5.
[13] Beck, *A Century of Service*, 5.
[14] Beck, *A Century of Service*, 7.
[15] United States Census Bureau [USCB], "Cities, Towns, Villages, and Boroughs," in *1900 Census*, Vol. 1, *Population, Part 1* (Washington, DC: USCB, 1901), 467.
[16] United States Census Bureau, "Number and Distribution of Inhabitants," in *1910 Census*, Vol. 1, *Population, General Report and Analysis* (Washington, DC: USCB, 1913), 94.

plant.[17] This site, which now houses the Rocky Mount Power Plant, the clear-water reservoirs, and the Sunset Avenue Water Treatment Plant, was outside city limits to distance the power plant's chimney smoke away from residences.[18] Construction of the new water and power plant began in 1908 and was completed the following year.[19] The 1909 Municipal Water Works and Electric Light Plant, also known as the "Electric Power and Water Station," stood directly south of the present Rocky Mount Power Plant. It was a rectangular one-story brick building that housed equipment for the electric light plant and water works. Also at the site was a 0.5-million-gallon, reinforced-concrete reservoir (Clear Well Two) to the south of the building, and a pump house (gone) and a reinforced concrete coagulating basin (gone) to the northwest. A spur line (gone) of the ACL Spring Hope Branch ran to the 1909 Municipal Water Works and Electric Light Plant (gone).[20]

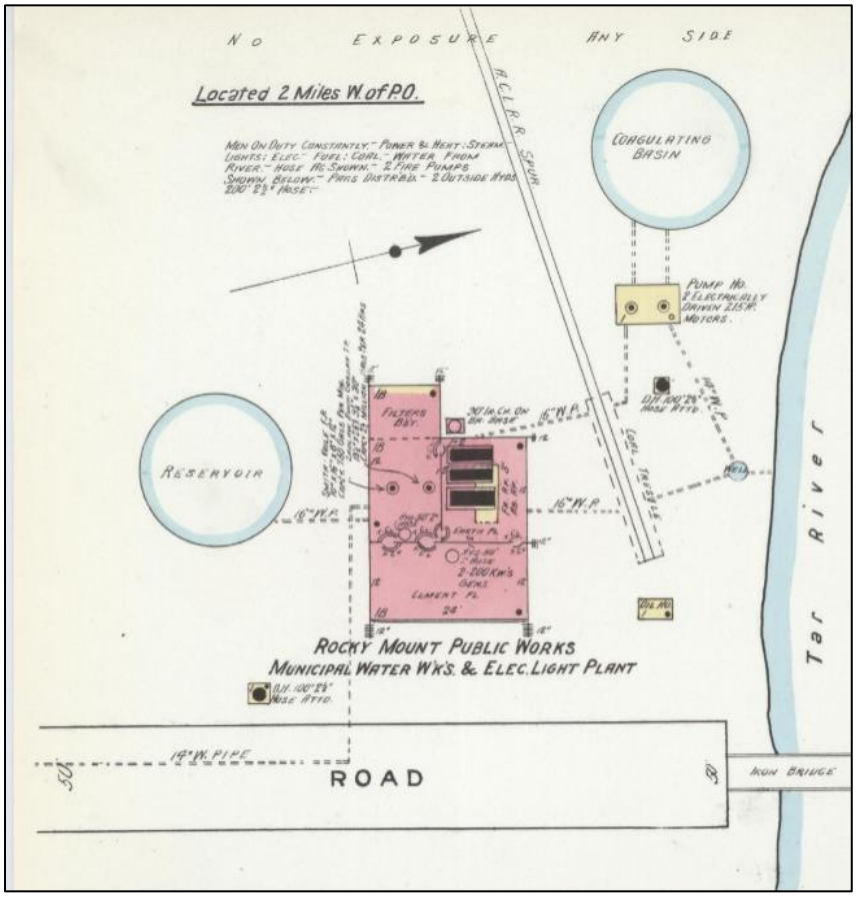


Figure 3. 1912 Sanborn map of the Rocky Mount Municipal Water Works and Electric Light Plant. The Rocky Mount Power Plant was built in 1923 between this building and the Tar River.

[17] Nash County Register of Deeds, September 16, 1908, Deed Book 174, p. 16.
[18] William Ferguson, "Local Landmark Designation Report for the Power Plant" (Rocky Mount, NC: Rocky Mount Historic Preservation Commission, 2013), 1.
[19] Beck, *A Century of Service*, 18.
[20] Sanborn Map Company, Insurance Maps of Rocky Mount, Nash & Edgecombe Counties, North Carolina (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1912), 28.

Following the construction of the 1909 Municipal Water Works and Electric Light Plant, the city expanded the facility in 1914, 1917, and 1919 on its west side to accommodate new water filters. The city also installed a new turbo generator in the electric light plant to increase its electric power capacity.[21] David J. Rose, a local contractor, constructed the 1917 addition.[22] In 1922, the city's Board of Commissioners hired R. G. Lassiter for the construction of a 1.5-million-gallon, reinforced-concrete reservoir (Clear Well One) directly south of Clear Well Two.[23]

Expanding Rocky Mount's Public Utilities, 1909 to 1930s

Despite expansions to the 1909 Municipal Water Works and Electric Light Plant, the city realized the need for a new electric power plant by the early 1920s. Electricity consumption in Rocky Mount had continued to grow in the early twentieth century due to factors such as housing development and population growth in Rocky Mount and the extension of the city's electric service to neighboring communities.

Rocky Mount's population of 12,742 in 1920 grew to 21,412 by 1930. Rocky Mount experienced a resurgence in residential development to house professionals and laborers who had moved to the city. A 1923 Sanborn map of Rocky Mount shows a grid of streets with mostly vacant blocks and lots west of North and South Mayo Street (on the Nash County side of Rocky Mount). From North and South Mayo Street to Bryant Street, there were no dwellings along West Thomas Street, six along Beal Street, nine along Sunset Avenue, and four along Western Avenue.[24] By 1930, residential development had expanded westward from West Mayo Street to Bryant Street. A 1930 Sanborn map shows 27 dwellings along Beal Street and 15 along Sunset Avenue between North and South Mayo Street and Bryant Street.[25] New subdivisions such as Edgemont in east Rocky Mount and Englewood and West Haven in west Rocky Mount were platted in the city's outlying areas in the 1910s and 1920s. The resulting population and geographic growth required a more efficient power plant than the outdated 1909 Municipal Water Works and Electric Power Plant.

By the mid-1920s, Rocky Mount had become a wholesale electric power supplier for neighboring communities. In 1922, the city extended its electric light service to the town of Nashville, North Carolina, at the request of the Nash Power Company. In the following two years, the towns of Sharpsburg and Red Oak also requested for Rocky Mount to extend its power lines to their towns.[26]

[21] Ferguson, "Local Landmark Designation Report," 2; Sanborn Map Company, *Insurance Maps of Rocky Mount, Nash & Edgecombe Counties, North Carolina* (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1917), 31; Sanborn Map Company, *Insurance Maps of Rocky Mount, North Carolina* (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1923), 50.
[22] "Disbursements," *Evening Telegram* (Rocky Mount, NC), June 5, 1917, 9.
[23] Beck, *A Century of Service*, 30. According to Jim Connelly, the superintendent of Rocky Mount's Water Treatment division, the current name for the 0.5-million-gallon clear-water reservoir is "Clear Well Two," while the 1.5-million-gallon clear-water reservoir is "Clear Well One." Sanborn maps show that the 0.5-million-gallon reservoir (Clear Well Two) was built before the 1.5-million-gallon reservoir (Clear Well One).
[24] Sanborn Map Company (1923), 27.
[25] Hill Directory Co., Inc., *Hill's Rocky Mount, North Carolina, City Directory* (Richmond, VA: Hill Directory Co., Inc., 1930), 346–347, 397–398.
[26] Beck, *A Century of Service*, 30.

Rocky Mount remained an electric power supplier for neighboring communities and rural customers until at least the mid-1950s.[27]

Due to the expansion of the city's electricity service and consumption, the city approved the construction of a new power plant building to increase the city's electric power capacity. In 1924, the city contracted with William C. Olsen, a consulting engineer from Raleigh, North Carolina, to design the Rocky Mount Power Plant. Completed in 1924, the Rocky Mount Power Plant stood directly north of the 1909 Municipal Water Works and Electric Light Plant and was the city's third municipally owned electric power plant.

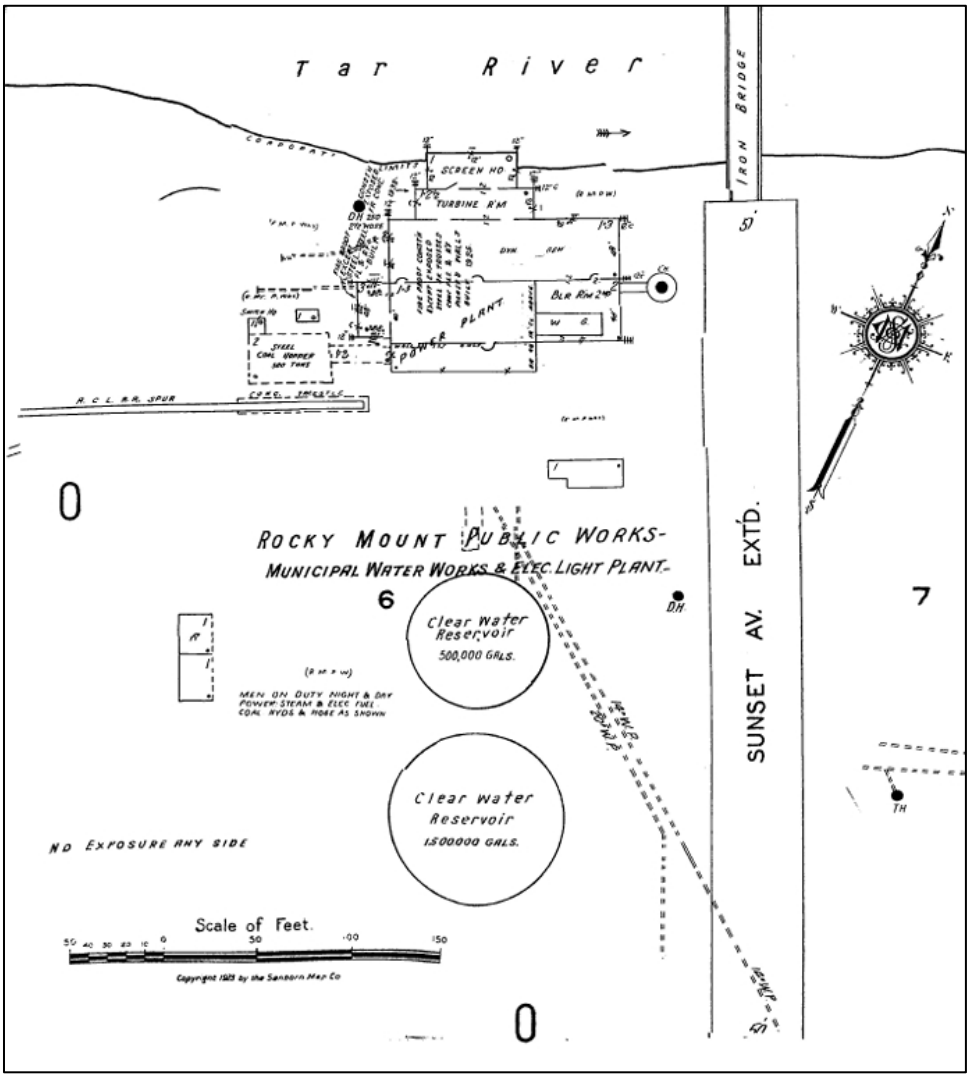


Figure 4. 1949 Sanborn map of the Rocky Mount Power Plant and two clear-water reservoirs.

[27] Edward L. Fike, "Should City Stay In or Get Out of Electric Business?" *Rocky Mount Telegram* (Rocky Mount, NC), May 3, 1953, 1B.

The City of Rocky Mount was not the only electricity provider in the area. In the 1920s, the ACL was purchasing electric power from a wholesale electric power supplier rather than upgrading its existing steam plant in south Rocky Mount. The city's power plant, however, did not have sufficient capacity to serve its existing customers and the ACL's facilities. In 1926, the ACL began purchasing electric power from the Carolina Power and Light Company (CP&L), a private utility company based in Raleigh. The CP&L successfully negotiated with the City of Rocky Mount in 1928 to connect their electric systems to CP&L facilities as a source of emergency power for the city.[28] The CP&L became the city's primary source of electric power in the 1960s.

Federal Relief and Public Works in Rocky Mount, 1930s

In the late 1920s, Rocky Mount's city council considered replacing the 1909 water treatment plant with a new facility. The 1909 Municipal Water Works and Electric Light Plant was outdated and in need of new equipment. The onset of the Great Depression, however, delayed the city's plan to construct a new facility. The Public Works Administration (PWA), a federal New Deal program, was established in 1933 by the National Industrial Recovery Act to fund state and local public work projects with grants and loans. Shortly after the establishment of the PWA, Rocky Mount applied for a grant for the construction of a new water treatment plant. The new facility had a total cost of $310,000. In addition to applying for a PWA grant, the city issued a $240,000 bond. That same year, the city contracted William C. Olsen, who had designed the Rocky Mount Power Plant (1924), to design the Sunset Avenue Water Treatment Plant (1935).[29] In 1934, the PWA awarded a $101,000 grant to the city to fund the labor and approximately 30 percent of the materials. The PWA also bought $183,000 of the city's bond, and local and New York banks purchased the remaining $72,000.[30] The city chose the site east of the existing clear-water reservoirs, across Sunset Avenue, as the site for the new water treatment plant. Construction began in 1934, and the Art Deco-style water treatment plant was completed the following year.

During this time, Olsen was one of the leading designers of water treatment plants in North Carolina. He designed utility facilities across the state, including the Elizabeth City Water Plant (NRHP listed, 1994) in Elizabeth City in 1926, the E. B. Bain Water Treatment Plant (NRHP listed, 1999) in Raleigh in 1939, a water treatment in Tarboro, and a power plant in Kinston.[31] The E. B. Bain Water Treatment Plant and the Sunset Avenue Water Treatment Plant were constructed in the Art Deco style, both featuring blocky forms with an emphasis on verticality of the central head house pavilion, and Art Deco-style exterior and interior ornamentation. The Sunset Avenue Water Treatment Plant was one of several Art Deco-style water work resources featured in a 1939

[28] Beck, *A Century of Service*, 34.
[29] Catherine W. Bishir, "Olsen, William C. (1888–1962)," North Carolina Architects & Builders: A Biographical Dictionary, https://ncarchitects.lib.ncsu.edu/people/P000493#:~:text=William%20C.%20Olsen%20(1888-1962),%20a%20native.
[30] "Water Plant Funds Assured," *Rocky Mount Herald* (Rocky Mount, NC), Mar. 2, 1934, 1.
[31] The Elizabeth City Water Plant is located at 1 Wilson Street, Elizabeth City, North Carolina. The E. B. Bain Water Treatment Plant is located at 1810 Fayetteville Street, Raleigh, North Carolina. Bishir, "Olsen, William C. (1888–1962)."

survey of PWA-sponsored public buildings.[32] The survey presented "some of the best examples of the different types of buildings and other structures which are the most interesting from architectural and engineering viewpoints."[33] The inclusion of the Sunset Avenue Water Treatment Plant in the study indicates that it was a representative example of PWA water work resources for its Art Deco-style architecture and water treatment technology. The interior arrangements of PWA-sponsored water treatment plants were consistent and included a head house with administrative and laboratory offices and an extended rear wing with operating floors.

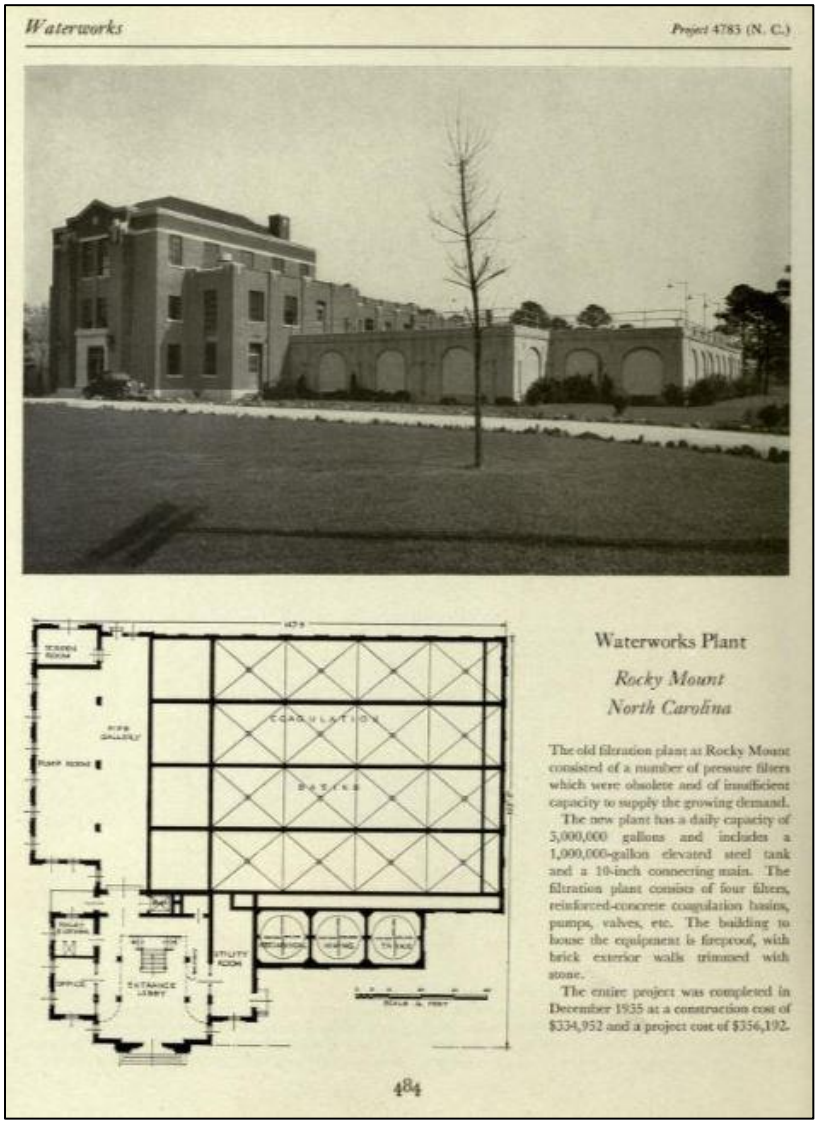


Figure 5. The Sunset Avenue Water Treatment Plant and its floor plan (Carmody and Clark 1939:484).

[32] John M. Carmody and E. W. Clark, *Public Buildings: A Survey of Architecture of Projects Constructed by Federal and Other Governmental Bodies Between the Years 1933 and 1939 with the Assistance of the Public Works Administration* (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1939), 484.
[33] Carmody and Clark, *Public Buildings*, 1.

Other federal relief programs also provided direct monetary and work relief during the Great Depression. FERA, established by President Roosevelt in 1933, provided funds to state and local governments for relief. The North Carolina Emergency Relief Administration (NCERA), a division of FERA, distributed federal funds for both direct relief and work relief in the state. NCERA preferred distributing funds to "public works of permanent value that would not have been undertaken at this time except for the availability of Federal funds." These public work projects included:

> assistance in highway and road maintenance; construction, and repair of public buildings; beautification and improvement of school grounds and other public buildings; improvement and beautification of municipal parks; drainage; water and sewer extensions; city streets; geodetic surveys; lunches for school children of families on relief; farm and garden work; and other work benefiting communities at large.[34]

In Rocky Mount, FERA funds were used for improvements at a municipal airport (not extant; formerly known as the Rocky Mount Municipal Airport, now the site of the Rocky Mount Sports Complex), construction of an African American school (extant; known as the Annie W. Holland School at 1108 Luper Street, now owned by Red Budd Holy Church), landscaping at City Lake, water and sewer line installation, school repair and maintenance, road repair, privy construction, and other relief projects.[35] In 1935, Congress stopped direct relief to states, and FERA was replaced by the Works Progress Administration (WPA). The Sunset Avenue Water Treatment Plant and City Lake are among the few surviving examples of federally funded, Depression-era public work projects in Rocky Mount that remain in use.

Unlike FERA, the WPA was created to provide work for unemployed people rather than direct relief. WPA projects included a variety of infrastructure, conservation, and humanities work. Recreational projects, like City Lake, were common in municipalities across North Carolina.[36]

As early as 1933, the city planned for the construction of a public lake and park near the 1909 Municipal Water Works and Electric Light Plant. On July 6, 1933, the city acquired a parcel of land, owned by Margaret E. Taylor and her siblings who all lived in Florida, directly south of the clear-water reservoirs to build a public lake and park.[37] The site was vacant and poorly drained due to its soil type, Roanoke silt loam, which occurred in small areas along the Tar River and some of the larger streams in Nash County. Due to its low agricultural value, areas with Roanoke silt loam typically were not used for cultivation.[38] One newspaper article, recounting the history of City Lake, described the site as being swampland before the excavation of the lake.[39] The site's proximity to the power plant and water reservoirs, however, made it a convenient location for the

[34] Kirk et al., *Emergency Relief in North Carolina,* 24.
[35] Kirk et al., *Emergency Relief in North Carolina,* 476.
[36] Works Progress Administration, *North Carolina WPA, Its Story* (Raleigh, NC: Works Progress Administration of North Carolina, 1940), 10.
[37] Nash County Register of Deeds, July 6, 1933, Deed Book 359, p. 567.
[38] W. D. Lee and S. R. Bacon, *Soil Survey of Nash County, North Carolina* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Chemistry and Soils, 1926), 45. https://digital.lib.ecu.edu/17013.
[39] Dan Thorp, "City Lake Brings Story and Beauty," *Gryphon* (Rocky Mount, NC), November 2, 1977, 6.

creation of the lake. The property deed for what was to later become City Lake had a racially restrictive covenant barring African Americans from using the site:

> The aforesaid property is conveyed subject, however, to the following conditions, restrictions, and reservations…. [1] That this property is not to be sold, rented or otherwise disposed of or used by people other than of the Caucasian race. [2] This property shall be used for a public lake, park and other recreational purposes by the Caucasian race only and for such purposes as will aid in conserving the water supply of the City of Rocky Mount.[40]

Around 1935, WPA workers excavated City Lake, which was also known as "Municipal Lake" and "Sunset Lake" (not to be confused with the nearby Sunset Park to the east of the district).[41] City Lake was one of two recreational and landscaping projects in Rocky Mount that was funded by the NCERA.[42] It was one of 75 parks in North Carolina that were built or improved by the WPA between 1935 and 1940.[43]

City Lake served two purposes for the city: a public recreational site for Rocky Mount's white residents, and an emergency water reservoir for the city. Recreational activities at the lake included fishing and boating, though for a time the city prohibited both activities. In the late 1930s, the city stocked City Lake with blue brim, speckled perch, rock bass, black bass, sun perch, and shad roach. Residents from the city and nearby countryside were allowed to stock their private ponds with fish from City Lake by request; however, illegal fishing persisted. In 1937, city officials observed that hundreds of fish, many below the legal size, were taken out of the lake through illegal fishing, and that fishermen were ruining the cultivated shrubbery along the lake. In 1949, the Rocky Mount Board of Alderman amended the city ordinance—which prohibited wading, swimming, fishing, or boating at City Lake—to permit supervised and regulated fishing.[44] Rocky Mount residents also held community events and celebrations such as Easter Sunrise Service, Independence Day, and May Day at City Lake.[45]

[40] Nash County Register of Deeds, July 6, 1933, Deed Book 359, p. 567.
[41] "Fish and the Lake," *Evening Telegram*, July 13, 1938, 4; Beth Keane, "West Haven Historic District," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2002), Section 8.
[42] Kirk et al., *Emergency Relief in North Carolina*, 476.
[43] Works Progress Administration, *North Carolina WPA*, 28.
[44] "Young Fishers Given Okay," *Evening Telegram*, May 20, 1949, 9A.
[45] Thorp, "City Lake Brings Story and Beauty;" "City Lake Park," *Rocky Mount Telegram*, June 26, 1988, 37.

Figure 6. Circa-1940 postcard depicting City Lake (1935), the power plant (1923), the Municipal Water Works and Electric Light Plant (1909), and the water treatment plant (1935) (Courtesy of the Braswell Memorial Library; John I. Taylor Postcard Collection, DigitalNC).

In 1936, the city applied for another PWA grant to double the capacity of the Rocky Mount Power Plant. The PWA approved a $259,000 loan and a $211,000 grant to the city for the installation of another turbine at the power plant; however, the city never received those funds.[46] At the time, Congress had not approved additional funding to the PWA to finance public work projects. Furthermore, the PWA was involved in a Supreme Court case—*Alabama Power Co. v. Ickes* (1938)—regarding whether the federal government could finance the construction of municipal power plants in competition with private industry.[47] PWA funds for other North Carolina municipalities were also delayed, such as a $2.5 million PWA fund for a proposed municipal power plant in High Point.[48] Without PWA funds, the city issued a $500,000 bond in July 1937 for improvements to the Rocky Mount Power Plant and the clear-water reservoirs; $480,000 was for purchasing new equipment and expanding the power plant, and the remaining $20,000 was for covering the two clear-water reservoirs to satisfy North Carolina Board of Health regulations.[49] The power plant improvements were completed in 1938 and included building additions and alterations to the turbine room and screen house, the installation of a new turbine, and the construction of an electrical substation across Sunset Avenue. The electrical substation, completed

[46] "Applicant Approved for WPA Loan, Grant," *Evening Telegram*, February 19, 1937, 1.
[47] United States Supreme Court, *Alabama Power Co. v. Ickes*, 203 U.S. 464 (1938).
[48] "P.W.A. Funds Lost by State Delay," *Rocky Mount Herald*, October 29, 1937, 1.
[49] "Intelligence in City Affairs," *Evening Telegram*, July 10, 1937, 4.

around 1938, was a transmission substation that regulated the voltage of electricity from the power plant before it entered distribution lines.[50] The obsolete 1909 Municipal Water Works and Electric Light Plant, after having its operation succeeded by the Rocky Mount Power Plant and the Sunset Avenue Water Treatment Plant, was demolished in 1941.[51]

Municipal Power and Water in the Mid-Twentieth Century, 1940s to 1971

From the late 1930s through the mid-twentieth century, the city continued to expand the power plant and water treatment plant for additional capacity. In 1941 and 1955, the city expanded the water treatment plant with additional filter rooms and subsidence basins to the rear of the original building. In 1949, a western section of the power plant was expanded and raised to five stories to house a new boiler. Despite these substantial expansions, the power plant became increasingly inefficient and expensive to operate, and the water treatment plant was becoming outdated by the 1960s.

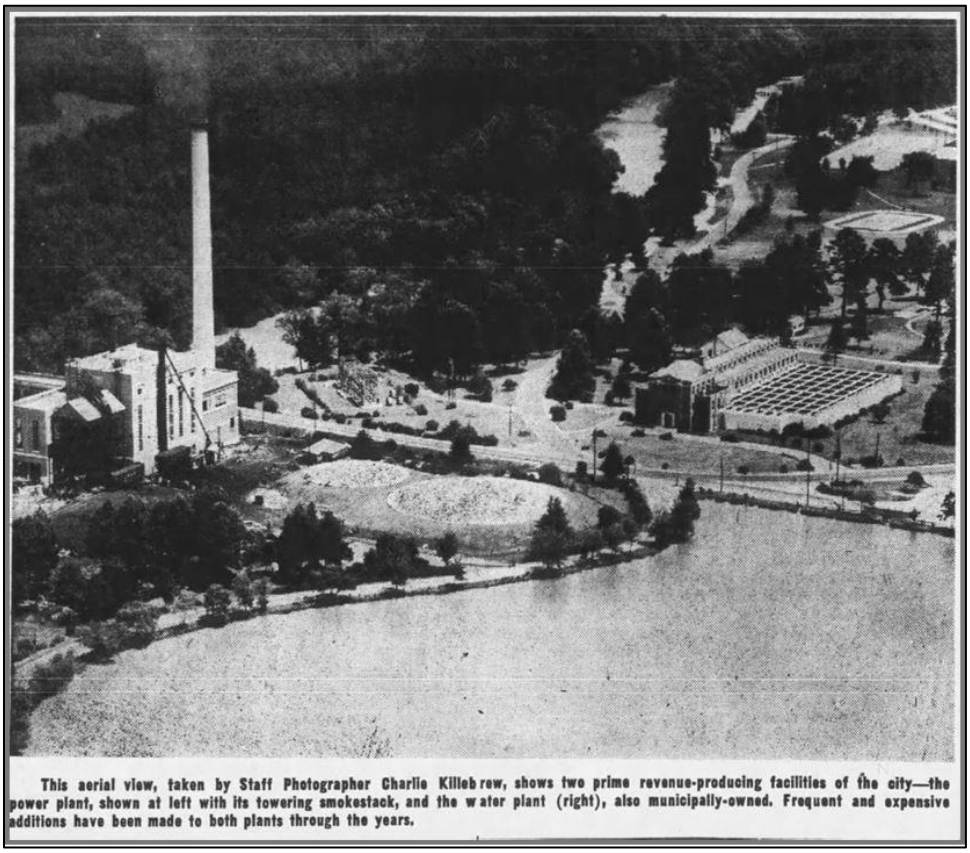

This aerial view, taken by Staff Photographer Charlie Killebrew, shows two prime revenue-producing facilities of the city—the power plant, shown at left with its towering smokestack, and the water plant (right), also municipally-owned. Frequent and expensive additions have been made to both plants through the years.

Figure 7. 1951 aerial photograph taken by Charie Killebrew. Notice the power plant's five-story boiler room and the additional filter rooms and basins that were built to the rear of the water treatment plant's original operating floor (Charlie Killebrew 1951).

[50] Walter Hargett, "City's New $65,000 Substation Is Rapidly Nearing Completion," *Evening Telegram*, October 8, 1938.
[51] Aycock, "City Manager Gives Review Of 1941 City Improvements," 1B.

As early as 1953, Rocky Mount residents and city officials looked for alternatives to the Rocky Mount Power Plant for electric power. In one newspaper article in the *Rocky Mount Telegram*, it was noted that residents had been questioning whether a "small electric plant like Rocky Mount's" could compete with private utility companies.[52] Some residents claimed that the power plant was no longer efficient and could not economically compete with large power companies like CP&L. In the 1950s, Rocky Mount was paying a monthly fee to CP&L to use the company's substation facilities and additional power. With a capacity of 15,000 kilowatts, the power plant was operating at full capacity during peak periods, presenting a challenge for the city as both Rocky Mount and electricity consumption continue to grow.[53] In 1963, the city decided to close the Rocky Mount Power Plant and sign a wholesale electric power contract with CP&L, ending the city's era of municipally owned electric power.[54] The power plant sat vacant from 1963 until 1985 when The Power Company, a Rocky Mount-based general partnership, acquired the property from the city.[55]

For most of the 1960s, municipalities throughout eastern North Carolina experienced drought conditions due to shortages of rainfall. Lake and river levels dropped throughout eastern North Carolina. In September 1968, the city's utilities director reported to the city council that the flow of the Tar River had dropped to 5.5 million gallons per day. At the time, water consumption in Rocky Mount was 10 million gallons per day.[56] In late September, the Tar River at Rocky Mount ran dry, resulting in a water crisis in the city until mid-October, when rainfall refilled the Tar River. During the city's water crisis, the city pumped water from nearby creeks.[57]

In response to the 1968 water shortage, the city approved a $3 million water system supply bond in January 1969 to finance the construction of an 1,800-acre storage reservoir, dam, and water treatment plant southwest of Rocky Mount. Construction of the Tar River Reservoir and the Tar River Reservoir Water Treatment Plant, located at 4489 Leaston Road approximately 5 miles southwest of the Sunset Avenue Water Treatment Plant, began in 1969 and was completed in 1971. Following the Tar River Reservoir Water Treatment Plant's completion, the city relegated the Sunset Avenue Water Treatment Plant to a backup water treatment facility.[58]

Sunset Avenue Public Works Historic District Today

Since 1985, the Rocky Mount Power Plant, Sunset Avenue Water Treatment Plant, and City Lake have been altered to varying degrees. Today, the power plant has been converted into a multi-use building, housing a restaurant and office spaces. From 1989 to 1994, the city built additional water treatment-related buildings and structures at the Sunset Avenue Water Treatment Plant complex, including an array of storage and machinery buildings to the west of the water treatment plant. The Sunset Avenue Water Treatment Plant was rehabilitated in 1991, including the replacement-in-

[52] Fike, "Should City Stay In," 1B.
[53] Fike, "Should City Stay In," 1B.
[54] Beck, *A Century of Service*, 57.
[55] Nash County Register of Deeds, November 14, 1985, Deed Book 1176, p. 577.
[56] Beck, *A Century of Service*, 61.
[57] Beck, *A Century of Service*, 63.
[58] Beck, *A Century of Service*, 66, 89.

kind of the copper roof, replacement of the windows, installation of new equipment and filters, and renovations to the offices and laboratories. The water treatment plant continues to function as a water treatment facility, though it typically only operates full time during the summer months. From 1991 to 1992, City Lake was the subject of a city beautification project to improve the lake and park's landscape. The city relocated Lake Drive, which circles the lake, to expand areas for pedestrians, bicyclists, and parking spaces; enlarged an existing island and constructed a new island (the pedestrian island); and installed a new multi-spray fountain, boardwalks, a gazebo, and an island trail.[59] City Lake continues to serve as a municipal lake and park.

Engineering Context

The Rocky Mount Power Plant and Sunset Avenue Water Treatment Plant expanded over time to address the need for electric power and water treatment capacities for Rocky Mount. The 1909 Municipal Water Works and Electric Light Plant, the city's first public utility building to incorporate both electric power and water treatment operations under one roof, quickly became inadequate at providing sufficient electric power and water treatment for the growing city. The 1924 Rocky Mount Power Plant and its 1949 boiler room were built to house additional machinery. The 1935 Sunset Avenue Water Treatment Plant was built across Sunset Avenue from the 1909 Municipal Water Works and Electric Light Plant to serve as the city's new water works facility. The water treatment plant's subsequent additions in 1941 and 1955 increased its filtration capacity.

From 1924 until 1963, the 1924 Rocky Mount Power Plant was part of a power generation and distribution system. The power plant was steam powered and incorporated early-twentieth-century, steam-electric power generation technologies such as boilers and turbine generators that were typical at the time. The power generating machinery was removed in the 1980s. The 1924 power plant consisted of a screen house that contained water pumps to pump water from the Tar River; boiler room that contained coal-fired boilers to produce steam; exterior chimney that released smoke; and turbine room that contained turbine generators to produce electricity from steam. Underground wiring connected the power plant to the 1938 substation across Sunset Avenue. The substation regulated the voltage of electricity from the power plant before it entered distribution lines.

The 1935 Sunset Avenue Water Treatment Plant incorporated early-twentieth-century engineering advances in water treatment, including a water intake, pump and filter rooms, mixing and chemical chambers, exterior subsidence basins, and storage reservoirs. In the 1990s, the Sunset Avenue Water Treatment Plant was renovated with new modern machinery, but the water treatment process is largely the same. The Sunset Avenue Water Treatment Plant's water intake draws in raw water from the Tar River to a subterranean raw water well below the water treatment plant. A pump room and pipe gallery with centrifugal pumps delivers the raw water from the raw water well to a mixing chamber that applies coagulant chemicals to the water. Exterior subsidence basins retain the water to allow sediments to sink before the water is sent through filters. The water is

[59] "Students give pennies to help beautify lake," *Rocky Mount Telegram*, March 10, 1991, 2.

chemically treated and piped and stored in the clear water reservoirs across Sunset Avenue or piped to overhead water tanks in the city.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

PRIMARY SOURCES

Miscellaneous Primary Sources (e.g., Interviews, Maps, Deeds)

Connolly, Jim. Personal interview with Pofue Yang at the Sunset Avenue Water Treatment Plant. April 9, 2024.

Connolly, Jim. Email message to Pofue Yang. June 28, 2024.

Hill Directory Co., Inc. *Hill's Rocky Mount, North Carolina, City Directory*. Richmond, VA: Hill Directory Co., Inc., 1930.

Killebrew, Charlie. *Aerial View of Power Plant and Water Treatment Plant* [photograph]. "City Shows Steady Forward March In Post-War Period." *Rocky Mount Sunday Telegram* (Rocky Mount, NC), March 11, 1951.

Lee, W. D. and S. R. Bacon. *Soil Survey of Nash County, North Carolina*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Chemistry and Soils, 1926. https://digital.lib.ecu.edu/17013.

Nash County Register of Deeds Office. Rocky Mount, North Carolina.

NC OneMap. Latest Orthoimagery. NC Orthoimagery Program, 2024.

Olsen, William C. *East End Elevation Municipal Power Plant* [blueprint]. 1924.

———. *North Side Elevation Municipal Power Plant* [blueprint]. 1924.

———. *Elevations* [blueprint]. 1938.

Sanborn Map Company. *Insurance Maps of Rocky Mount, Nash & Edgecombe Counties, North Carolina*. New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1912.

———. *Insurance Maps of Rocky Mount, Nash & Edgecombe Counties, North Carolina*. New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1917.

———. *Insurance Maps of Rocky Mount, North Carolina*. New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1923.

———. *Insurance Maps of Rocky Mount, North Carolina*. New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1949.

Taylor, John I. *Municipal Lake, Showing Power and Water Plants, Rocky Mount, N.C.* Postcard. John I. Taylor Postcard Collection. DigitalNC. https://lib.digitalnc.org/record/10447?ln=en&v=uv#?xywh=-95%2C-121%2C1891%2C1367.

United States Census Bureau [USCB]. *1900 Census*. Vol. 1, *Population, Part 1*. Washington, DC: USCB, 1901.

———. *1910 Census*. Vol. 1, *Population, General Report and Analysis*. Washington, DC: USCB, 1913.

United States Supreme Court. *Alabama Power Co. v. Ickes*, 203 U.S. 464 (1938).

Newspaper Articles with Author

Aycock, L. B. "City Manager Gives Review of 1941 City Improvements." *Evening Telegram* (Rocky Mount, NC), January 1, 1942.

Fike, Edward L. "Should City Stay In or Get Out of Electric Business?" *Rocky Mount Telegram* (Rocky Mount, NC), May 3, 1953.

Hargett, Walter. "City's New $65,000 Substation Is Rapidly Nearing Completion." *Evening Telegram* (Rocky Mount, NC), October 8, 1938.

Thorp, Dan. "City Lake Brings Story and Beauty." *Gryphon* (Rocky Mount, NC), November 2, 1977.

Newspaper Articles with No Author

Evening Telegram (Rocky Mount, NC). "Disbursements." 5 June 1917.

———. "Applicant Approved for WPA Loan, Grant." 19 February 1937.

———. "Intelligence in City Affairs." 10 July 1937.

———. "Fish and the Lake." 13 July 193.

———. "Young Fishers Given Okay." 20 May 1949.

Rocky Mount Herald (Rocky Mount, NC). "Water Plant Funds Assured." 2 March 1934.

———. "P.W.A. Funds Lost by State Delay." 29 October 1937.

Rocky Mount Telegram (Rocky Mount, NC). "City Lake Park." 26 June 1988.

———. "Students give pennies to help beautify lake." 10 March, 1991.

SECONDARY SOURCES

Beck, Bill. *A Century of Service: City of Rocky Mount Public Utilities*. Rocky Mount, NC: City of Rocky Mount, 2002.

Bishir, Catherine W. "Olsen, William C. (1888–1962)." North Carolina Architects & Builders: A Biographical Dictionary. https://ncarchitects.lib.ncsu.edu/people/P000493#:~:text=William%20C.%20Olsen%20(1888-1962),%20a%20native.

Carmody, John M. and E. W. Clark. *Public Buildings: A Survey of Architecture of Projects Constructed by Federal and Other Governmental Bodies Between the Years 1933 and 1939 with the Assistance of the Public Works Administration*. Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1939.

Dishner, Paul J. "Complete Treatment Provided at Rocky Mount, N. C., Plant." *The Journal of the Water Works Profession Since 1877* 89, no. 5 (1936).

Fearnbach, Heather. "Rocky Mount Central City Historic District Boundary Increase and Decrease and Additional Documentation." National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2009.

Ferguson, William. "Local Landmark Designation Report for the Power Plant." Rocky Mount, NC: Rocky Mount Historic Preservation Commission, 2013.

Howells, David H. "Historical Account of Public Water Supplies in North Carolina." Report No. 244 of the Water Resources Research Institute of The University of North Carolina. Raleigh, NC. 1989.

Keane, Beth. "West Haven Historic District." National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2002.

Kirk, J. S., Walter A. Cutter, and Thomas W. Morse, eds. *Emergency Relief in North Carolina: A Record of the Development and the Activities of the North Carolina Emergency Relief Administration, 1932-1935*. Raleigh, NC: Edwards & Broughton Company, 1936.

Municipal Power Plant (NS1183) Survey File. On file, North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office.

Pearsall, Beth. "Rocky Mount Electric Power Plant." National Register of Historic Places Inventory – Nomination Form. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1982.

Rocky Mount Waterworks (NS1182) Survey File. On file, North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, Raleigh, North Carolina.

Works Progress Administration. *North Carolina WPA, Its Story*. Raleigh, NC: Works Progress Administration of North Carolina, 1940.

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:

__x__ State Historic Preservation Office
____ Other State agency
____ Federal agency
____ Local government
__x__ University
____ Other
Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _NS1593_____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property _Approximately 32.23 acres_____

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: 35.95197199720	Longitude: -77.82120536400
2. Latitude: 35.95254497890	Longitude: -77.81936001200
3. Latitude: 35.95264832440	Longitude: -77.81882746520
4. Latitude: 35.95248795710	Longitude: -77.81789463050
5. Latitude: 35.95221249550	Longitude: -77.81731833260
6. Latitude: 35.95162400430	Longitude: -77.81730409240
7. Latitude: 35.95079810640	Longitude: -77.81798046240
8. Latitude: 35.94864199700	Longitude: -77.81777298790
9. Latitude: 35.94815582660	Longitude: -77.81940023270
10. Latitude: 35.94910886670	Longitude: -77.82207329860
11. Latitude: 35.95071434520	Longitude: -77.82168072510

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 boundary of the Sunset Avenue Public Works Historic District is illustrated by the blue line on the accompanying map "National Register of Historic Places Boundary & Coordinates Map." The boundary encompasses all of three tax parcels (PIN #384016930324, #384016920840, and #384016936099) and the western portion of a fourth parcel (PIN #385013034739). The city of Rocky Mount owns all these parcels except for PIN #384016930324. These parcels include the Rocky Mount Power Plant, City Lake, and the Sunset Avenue Water Treatment Plant. The adjacent Sunset Park is excluded from the boundary.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary of the Sunset Avenue Public Works Historic District includes all the intact buildings, structures, and site historically associated with public utilities and public work during the Period of Significance (1909 to 1976). Altogether, the boundary includes eight contributing resources (one site, two buildings, and five structures) and nine non-contributing resources (one structure, eight buildings). All nine non-contributing resources are in proximity to the contributing primary resources. All nine non-contributing resources are non-contributing because they are under 50 years of age. Eight of the nine non-contributing resources are water-treatment related resources and are part of the current operation of the Sunset Avenue Water Treatment Plant. Therefore, the nine non-contributing resources were included in the boundary.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: _Pofue Yang/Architectural Historian_____
organization: _Richard Grubb & Associates, Inc._____
street & number: _525 Wait Ave_____
city or town: _Wake Forest _____ state: _NC_____ zip code:_27587___
e-mail: _pyang@rgaincorporated.com_____
telephone: _919-238-4596 ext. 404_____
date: _December 6, 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.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Sunset Avenue Public Works Historic District
City or Vicinity: Rocky Mount
County: Nash State: North Carolina
Photographer: Pofue Yang
Date Photographed: November 2023, April 2024, and June 2024

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

1 of 12
Description: City Lake and the Rocky Mount Power Plant
Direction: Northwest

2 of 12
Description: Sunset Avenue Water Treatment Plant and Rocky Mount Power Plant
Direction: Northwest

3 of 12
Description: Sunset Avenue Water Treatment Plant
Direction: Southeast

4 of 12
Description: Rocky Mount Power Plant, north elevation
Direction: South

5 of 12
Description: Rocky Mount Power Plant, south elevation
Direction: Northwest

6 of 12
Description: Sunset Avenue Water Treatment Plant
Direction: East

7 of 12
Description: Sunset Avenue Water Treatment Plant, façade (west) elevation
Direction: East

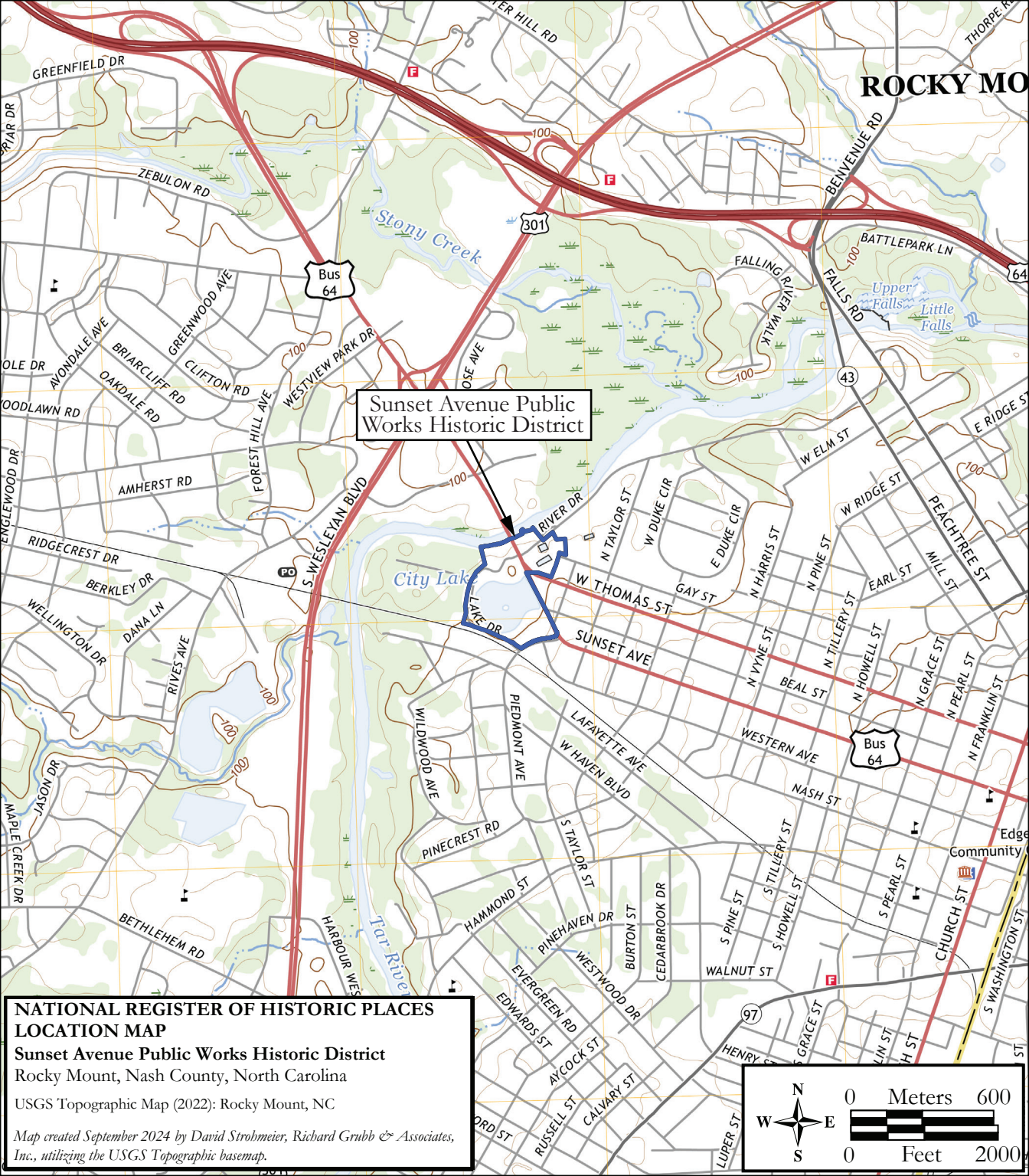
8 of 12
Description: Sunset Avenue Water Treatment Plant's ancillary buildings
Direction: Southeast

9 of 12
Description: Sunset Avenue Water Treatment Plant, electrical substation, and Rocky Mount Power Plant
Direction: Southwest

10 of 12
Description: Water intake in the Tar River
Direction: East

11 of 12
Description: Clear Well Two and Clear Well One
Direction: South

12 of 12
Description: City Lake
Direction: Northeast



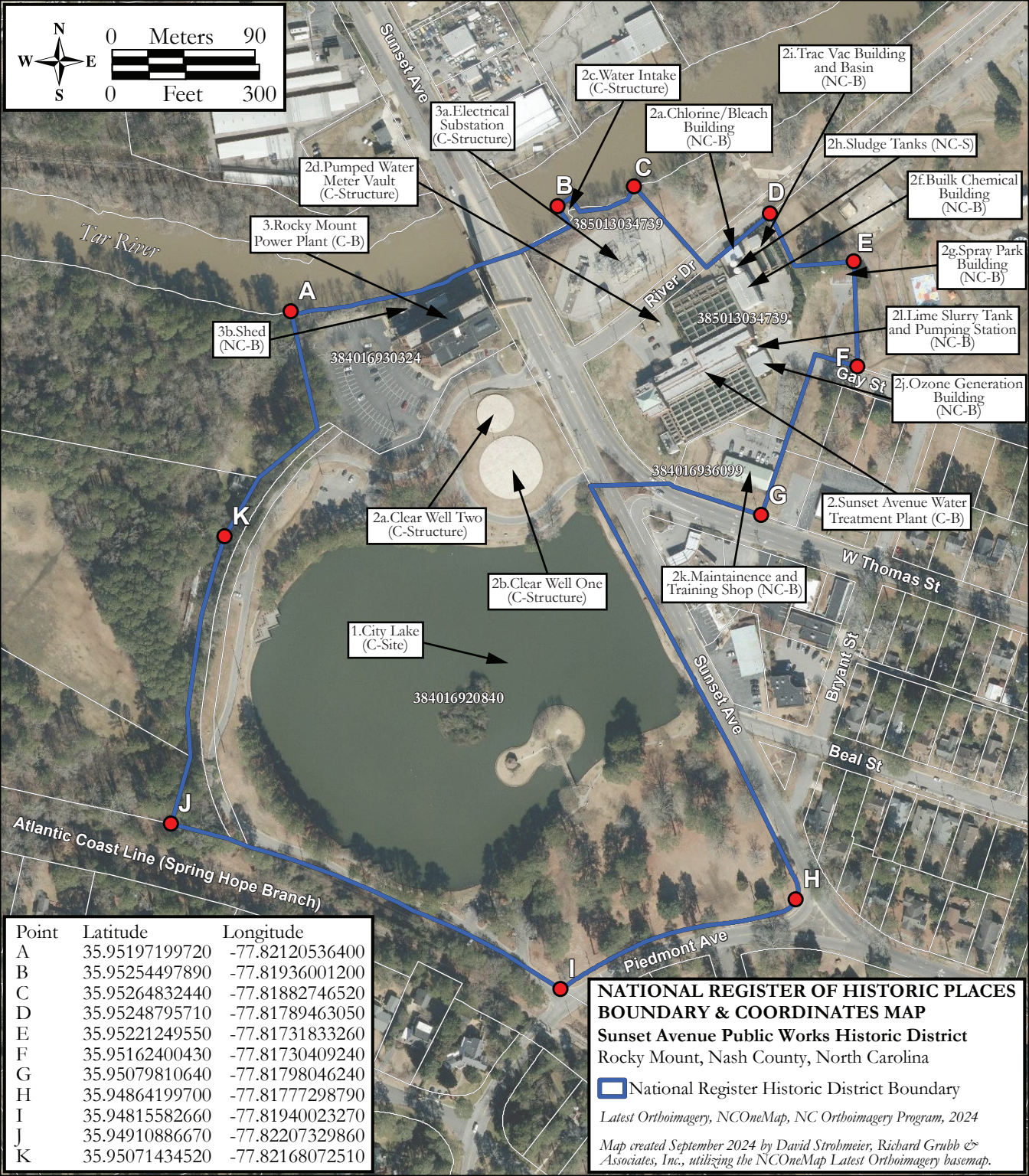
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES LOCATION MAP

Sunset Avenue Public Works Historic District

Rocky Mount, Nash County, North Carolina

USGS Topographic Map (2022): Rocky Mount, NC

Map created September 2024 by David Strohmeier, Richard Grubb & Associates, Inc., utilizing the USGS Topographic basemap.



Point	Latitude	Longitude
A	35.95197199720	-77.82120536400
B	35.95254497890	-77.81936001200
C	35.95264832440	-77.81882746520
D	35.95248795710	-77.81789463050
E	35.95221249550	-77.81731833260
F	35.95162400430	-77.81730409240
G	35.95079810640	-77.81798046240
H	35.94864199700	-77.81777298790
I	35.94815582660	-77.81940023270
J	35.94910886670	-77.82207329860
K	35.95071434520	-77.82168072510

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES BOUNDARY & COORDINATES MAP

Sunset Avenue Public Works Historic District

Rocky Mount, Nash County, North Carolina

National Register Historic District Boundary

Latest Orthoimagery, NCOneMap, NC Orthoimagery Program, 2024

Map created September 2024 by David Strohmeier, Richard Grubb & Associates, Inc., utilizing the NCOneMap Latest Orthoimagery basemap.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES PHOTO KEY

Sunset Avenue Public Works Historic District
Rocky Mount, Nash County, North Carolina

National Register Historic District Boundary
x.x Photo Location and Direction

Latest Orthoimagery, NCOneMap, NC Orthoimagery Program, 2024

Map created September 2024 by David Strohmeier, Richard Grubb & Associates, Inc., utilizing the NCOneMap Latest Orthoimagery basemap.