

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

FINAL

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 How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an 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. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Van Buren Terrace Historic District

other names/site number The Edison Concept Houses

2. Location

street & number 336-354 Van Buren Street N/A ☐ not for publication  
city or town Gary N/A ☐ vicinity  
state Indiana code IN county Lake code 089 zip code 46402

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 36CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  
☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  
☐ nationally ☒ statewide ☐ locally. ( ☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Indiana Department of Natural Resources

State or Federal agency and bureau

Date

5/1/2007

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ( ☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register.  
☐ See continuation sheet.

- ☐ determined eligible for the  
National Register  
☐ See continuation sheet.

- ☐ determined not eligible for the  
National Register

- ☐ removed from the National Register

- ☐ other, (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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## 5. Classification

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### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

☒ private  
☐ public-local  
☐ public-State  
☐ public-Federal

### Category of Property

(Check only one box)

☐ building(s)  
☒ district  
☐ site  
☐ structure  
☐ object

### Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>10</u>	<u>      </u> buildings
<u>      </u>	<u>      </u> sites
<u>      </u>	<u>      </u> structures
<u>      </u>	<u>      </u> objects
<u>10</u>	<u>  0  </u> Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register       0      

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Concrete in the Steel City: The Edison Concept Houses of Gary, Indiana

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## 6. Function or Use

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### Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: DOMESTIC Sub: single dwelling

Cat:        Sub:       

Cat:        Sub:       

Cat:        Sub:       

### Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: DOMESTIC Sub: single dwelling

Cat:        Sub:       

Cat:        Sub:       

Cat:        Sub:       

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## 7. Description

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Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19<sup>th</sup> & Early 20th Century American Movements:

Bungalow/ Craftsman

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Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete

roof asphalt

walls concrete

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other       

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Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

## 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)

       G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

ENGINEERING

INVENTION

Period of Significance

1910-1957

Significant Dates

1910

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Creighton, D. F. Architect

The United States Sheet and Tin Plate Company, Builder

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 a grave.

       D a cemetery.

       E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

       F a commemorative property.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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 #                     

Primary Location of Additional Data

       State Historic Preservation Office

       Other State agency

       Federal agency

       Local government

  X   University

       Other

Name of repository:

Indiana University Northwest Calumet Archives

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## 10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property Less than one acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone Easting	North	Zone Easting	North
1	_____	_____	3	_____
2	_____	_____	4	_____

\_\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

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## 11. Form Prepared By

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name/title Christopher Baas  
organization \_\_\_\_\_ date December 2006  
street & number 21116 North Banbury telephone (317)877-7799  
city or town Noblesville state IN zip code 46062

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## Additional Documentation

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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## Property Owner

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name Various  
street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.). A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number.

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to range from approximately 18 hours to 36 hours depending on several factors including, but not limited to, how much documentation may already exist on the type of property being nominated and whether the property is being nominated as part of a Multiple Property Documentation Form. In most cases, it is estimated to average 36 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form to meet minimum National Register documentation requirements. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, 1849 C St., NW, Washington, DC 20240.

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Van Buren Terrace Historic District  
Lake County, Indiana

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## 7. Description

The Van Buren Terrace Historic District is a grouping of ten row houses located in the First Subdivision of Gary, Indiana. The terrace is located in a residential area on the west side of Van Buren Street between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Avenues. A Gary Land Company constructed duplex is located to the north, Franklin Park is located east across Van Buren Street, a residential property borders the south, and an alley runs along the west edge of the property. Fifth Avenue, Gary's primary east/west thoroughfare is located two blocks south, and the South Shore Rail Road and the Indiana Toll Road are located a block to the north.

The terrace is approximately 150 feet long, 39 feet deep, and has a 7 foot deep concrete porch. Each house measures 15 feet x 39 feet deep, and has a 15 foot by 7 foot porch. The building is three stories in height and has a basement. The exterior walls, basement walls, and the walls between each house are constructed of formed concrete. The roof, floors, and interior partitions are constructed of dimensional lumber. Each house has a flat roof that sheds to the rear (west), front and side parapet walls, a skylight, and a chimney. Architectural ornamentation is formed in the concrete walls, and located on the front façade and porch. Cast details include panels, geometric ornaments, simulated window sills, and parapet walls capped with pediments and molding (See photos 8 & 9).

Until recently, 352 Van Buren was occupied. The remaining houses are currently vacant, and were enclosed with plywood by 352's owner in an effort to protect the houses for future rehabilitation. It is assumed that 352 is representative of all the houses, and is the sole source for the description of the interior.

The symmetrical, three-story front façade has a continuous, single story, porch that extends the length of the terrace. It is equally divided into five sections, and each bay contains two houses. The bays are defined by variations in the parapet roof, window spacing, and a simulated buttress that extends from the porch to the roofline. At the second story level, the buttress narrows in size and displays weatherings (See photos 1-4).

The central section has a pedimented parapet roof that displays geometric ornamentation at its crown, and squared slots on its corners. Each story has two sets of paired one-over-one double-hung windows with concrete sills. While the other bays have porches with flat roofs, the central section's porch displays a slightly pedimented roof that is topped by a band, has a decorative ornament at its crown, and is supported at its corners by plain columns topped by brackets. The central section is flanked by bays that have a flat parapet roof with two decorative, battlement-like slots. Each story has four one-over-one double-hung windows with a continuous sill. The two end sections have a parapet roof with a small pediment with a geometric ornamentation at its crown. Like the central bay, each story has two sets of paired one-over-one double-hung windows with formed sills.

Each house has a raised porch with a flat roof that covers the façade's ground story. It is accessed by concrete steps that have concrete sidewalls. An opening to the basement's coal room is located next to each stairs. The roof is supported by concrete columns that are located between each house, and display linear, panel-like details. The porch's frieze displays cast, square impressions with a triangle tassel located at the center of each bay. A low wall topped with a wood, four light window divides the interior of each porch. It is unclear if these divisions were, historically, open, or held glass lights or screens. Each house's ground story has an entry door and paired one-over-one double-hung windows.



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The terrace's north and south facades are windowless concrete walls that display the roof's sloping side parapet wall, and the well for the skylight of the end houses.

The west façade is divided into five projecting wings by narrow, three-story courtyards that allow light and air into the sides of each house (See photos 6 & 7). Each wing and courtyard serves two houses. The ground story of the wing's rear façade displays two one-over-one double-hung windows between two entry doors. The second and third stories have two one-over-one double-hung windows. The courtyard's side walls display a single one-over-one double-hung window on the first and third stories, and two on the second. The courtyard's rear wall connects to the sidewalls at two forty-five degree angles, and display one-over-one double-hung windows on each story. The courtyards have doors to the basement.

The houses have identical interior layouts in alternating, mirrored plans. They have Arts and Crafts inspired details. The ground story consists of a living room at the front of the house, a dining room in the center, and a kitchen in the rear. Entry doors are located from the porch into the living room, and from the rear yard into the kitchen. The interior walls, floors, and partitions are wood frame construction. The ceilings and walls have plaster applied to weaved lath, likely prefabricated and installed in panels. The floors are wood, and the baseboards are a plank topped with a simple molding. Door surrounds simulate a classical entablature supported by column-like jambs (See photo 13). The doors display a large panel over a smaller panel.

The living room has a fireplace constructed of thin, linear bricks. It has a concrete mantel and hearth, and a cast iron insert flanked by vents (See photo 11). The stairs are located in the living room, and are enclosed on one side by the house's outer wall, and open to the living room. It displays a paneled stringer, and a floor-to-ceiling newel post of two stacked, square columns that are equal in height. The lower column has paneled sides, chamfered corners, a plain base, and is topped by a molding that simulates a capital. The upper column is thinner, has chamfered corners, and moldings that simulate a base and capital. The handrail is supported by thin, rectangular balusters (See photo 10).

The dining room has built-in shelves over a two-door cabinet base (See photo 12). One corner of the room is constructed on a forty-five degree angle to allow light and air to enter from the rear courtyard. The small kitchen has a door to the rear yard, and built-in cabinets. The second and third stories are identical, and consist of three bedrooms and a bathroom clustered around a hallway and the stairwell. A square skylight illuminates the stairwell. The basement has a coal room beneath the porch, and utility spaces for the furnace and laundry machines. The basement walls display the imprint of the 24"x 24" units used to form the structure.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

The Van Buren Terrace Historic District is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A as an example of the historic trends in the development and growth of the City of Gary. It represents a novel concept for house construction designed, patented, and promoted by inventor Thomas A. Edison, and refined by architect Milton Dana Morrill. Their construction was regarded as the country's first experiment of this type of large-scale housing production. Constructed for the employees of the U.S. Sheet and Tin Plate Company, they are also representative of one solution to the city's housing shortage caused by the influx of workers to the new mills.

The district is eligible under Criterion C as an outstanding example of early twentieth century company-supplied worker housing that utilized experimental methods and materials of house construction. The houses were designed by architect D. F. Creighton of Ambridge, Pennsylvania. They exhibit simple, efficient, and homey spaces. The exterior use of cast details shows the architect's understanding of the need for variation to lessen the monotony of mass production. The terrace is identified in the Lake County Interim Report and was given an Outstanding rating.

The Van Buren Terrace's period of significance is 1910-1957. Terrace construction began in 1910, and the fifty year benchmark for eligibility is 1957. City directories indicate the mill continued to rent the houses into the early 1970's. Rental periods appear to have been as short as a year and for up to decade or more in length. Some units continued to be rented for several years to the widows of mill workers.

The district is included in the *Concrete in the Steel City: The Edison Concept Houses of Gary, Indiana* (2007) Multiple Property Document within the historic context of *United States Sheet and Tin Plate Company Concrete Houses of Gary, Indiana, 1910-1957*. By 1910, Gary's private enterprises could not keep up with the housing demand caused by the new U.S. Steel mill works and its subsidiaries. To help speed the transfer of management level employees, the subsidiary U.S. Sheet and Tin Plate Company constructed worker housing in terraces of formed concrete. The houses are the initial attempt of employing Thomas Edison's concept of providing affordable housing for the working classes. Beginning in 1906, Edison patented metal forms and a process for casting a house in a single pour. Edison's concept was further developed by others, most notably architect Milton Dana Morrill who patented a forming system that was reportedly used for working class houses in Virginia and Pennsylvania, and may have been used in Budapest, Hungary. Morrill's forms were based on the assemblage of 24"x24" panels. Although no connection between Morrill and the mill has been established, the terrace's concrete walls display a pattern consistent with the Morrill system.

Of the eight terraces constructed, the Van Buren Terrace is the only one constructed three stories in height and with six bedrooms (the other seven are only two stories in height and have three bedrooms). The census data shows that, unlike the family units present in the other terraces, the Van Buren Terrace was inhabited mostly by single, male, immigrants. For instance, the terrace averaged 8.6 persons per unit, almost four more than the highest number living in other terraces. The house at 340 Van Buren had eleven male, Greek mill laborers, and the house at 346 had ten. As demonstrated by the high population of renters, the terrace may have been built specifically to house the general labor force, as oppose to the management level families found in the other terraces.

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Also unique to the Van Buren Terrace is its location on Franklin Park. The site was originally platted for a school, but local residents convinced the park board to purchase the block when the Gary Land Company made it available for house construction.<sup>1</sup> It was the location for one of the city's earliest baseball fields, and hosted mill and city league games.

The Multiple Property Document presented the houses' historic context, significance, and conditions for listing. To be eligible, the district, must display the integrity of design, location, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Although the Van Buren Terrace has been mostly vacant for several years, and is currently enclosed with plywood, it continues to display its historic integrity. The terrace's overall design is intact. The exterior appearance and interior spaces represent original design and construction. The concrete building material has not been covered or altered, and a representative portion of the historic interior woodwork and details remain. Unlike other terraces, the porches have not been enclosed. The terrace is in its original location, and its historic, residential, First Subdivision context remains relatively intact. The terrace was constructed across from Franklin Park, a city park established about 1913 that still remains. The terrace's materials represent the workmanship of materials, most notably the concrete walls, cast details, woodwork, plaster, and windows.

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<sup>1</sup> "North Side Folk Ask Park Board For Small Park," *The Gary Evening Post*, June 11, 1913.



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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Baas, Christopher. *Concrete in the Steel City: The Edison Concept Houses of Gary, Indiana* Multiple Property Document, 2007.

Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana. *Lake County Interim Report: Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory*. Indianapolis, 1996.

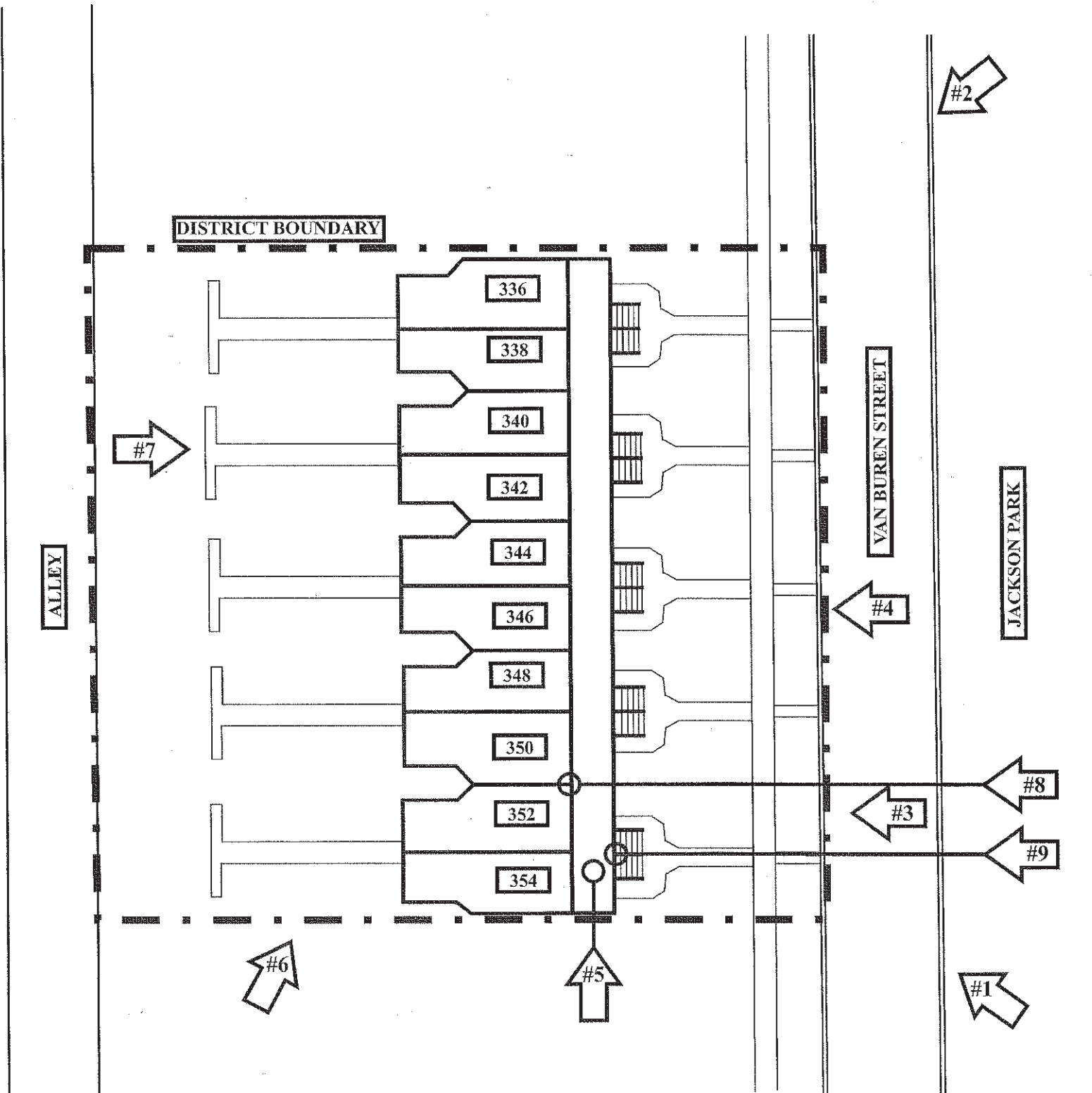
## 10. Geographical Data

### Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary for the Van Buren Terrace Historic District starts at a point of beginning on the center line of Van Buren Street perpendicular to the north property line of 336 Van Buren; then south to a point on the center line of Van Buren Street perpendicular to the south property line of 354 Van Buren; then west to a point on the center line of the alley behind the Van Buren Terrace; then north to a point on the center line on the alley that is perpendicular to the north property line of 334 Van Buren; then returning to the point of beginning.

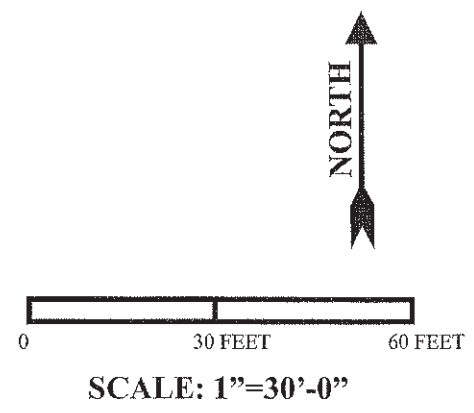
### Boundary Justification

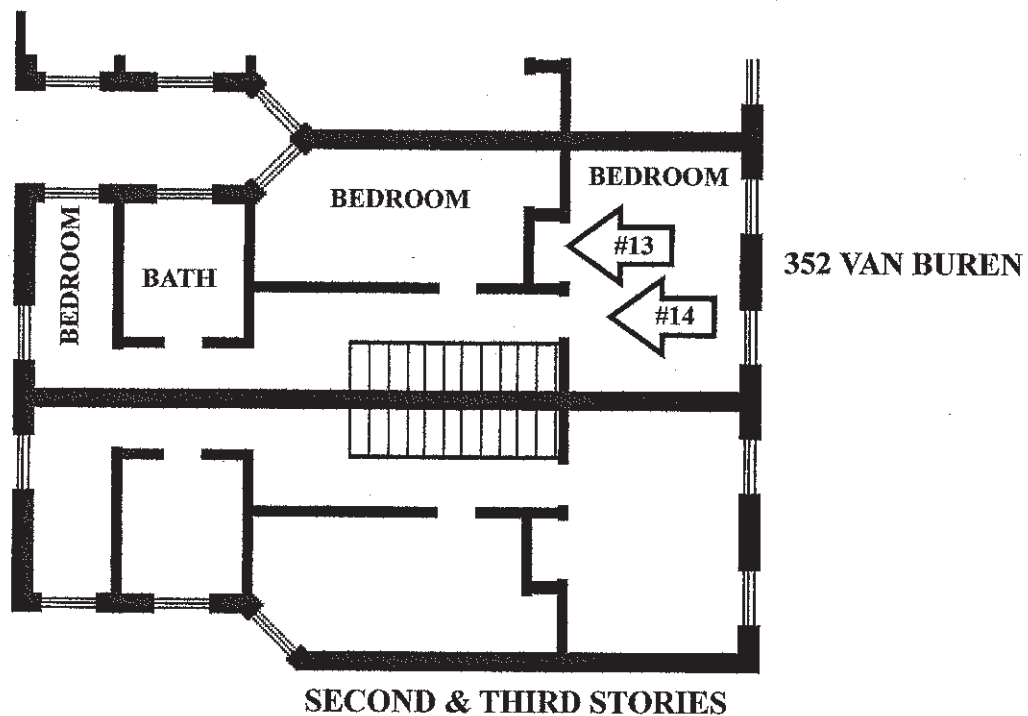
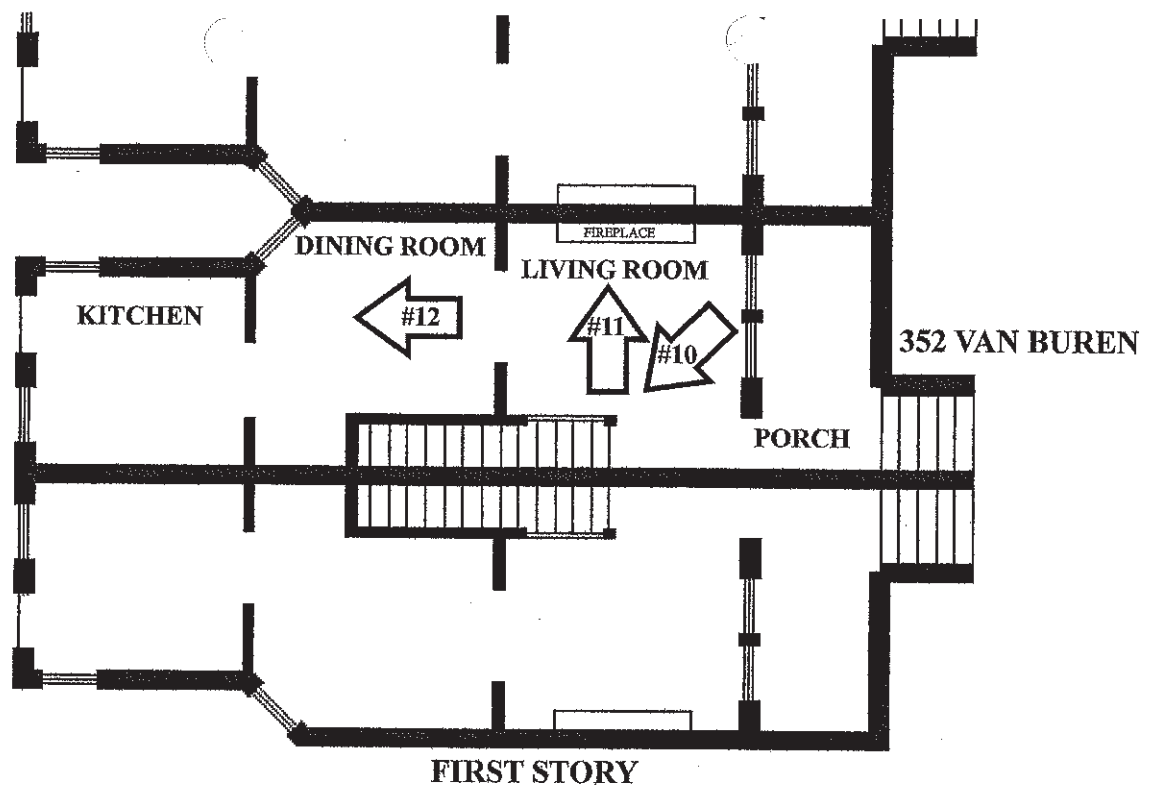
The rectangular boundary uses easily identifiable points to define its limits. It includes all ten resources, and excludes neighboring properties.



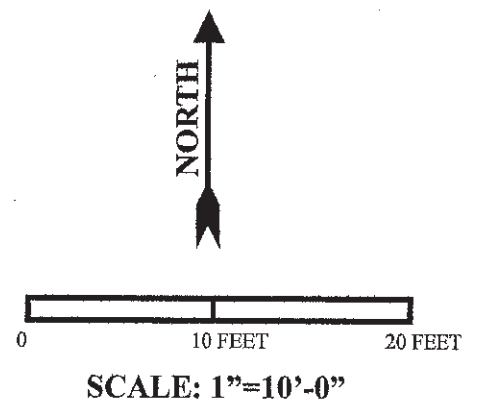
#1 PHOTO NUMBER AND DIRECTION OF VIEW

**Van Buren Terrace Historic District**  
**336-354 Van Buren Street**  
**City of Gary**  
**Lake County, Indiana**



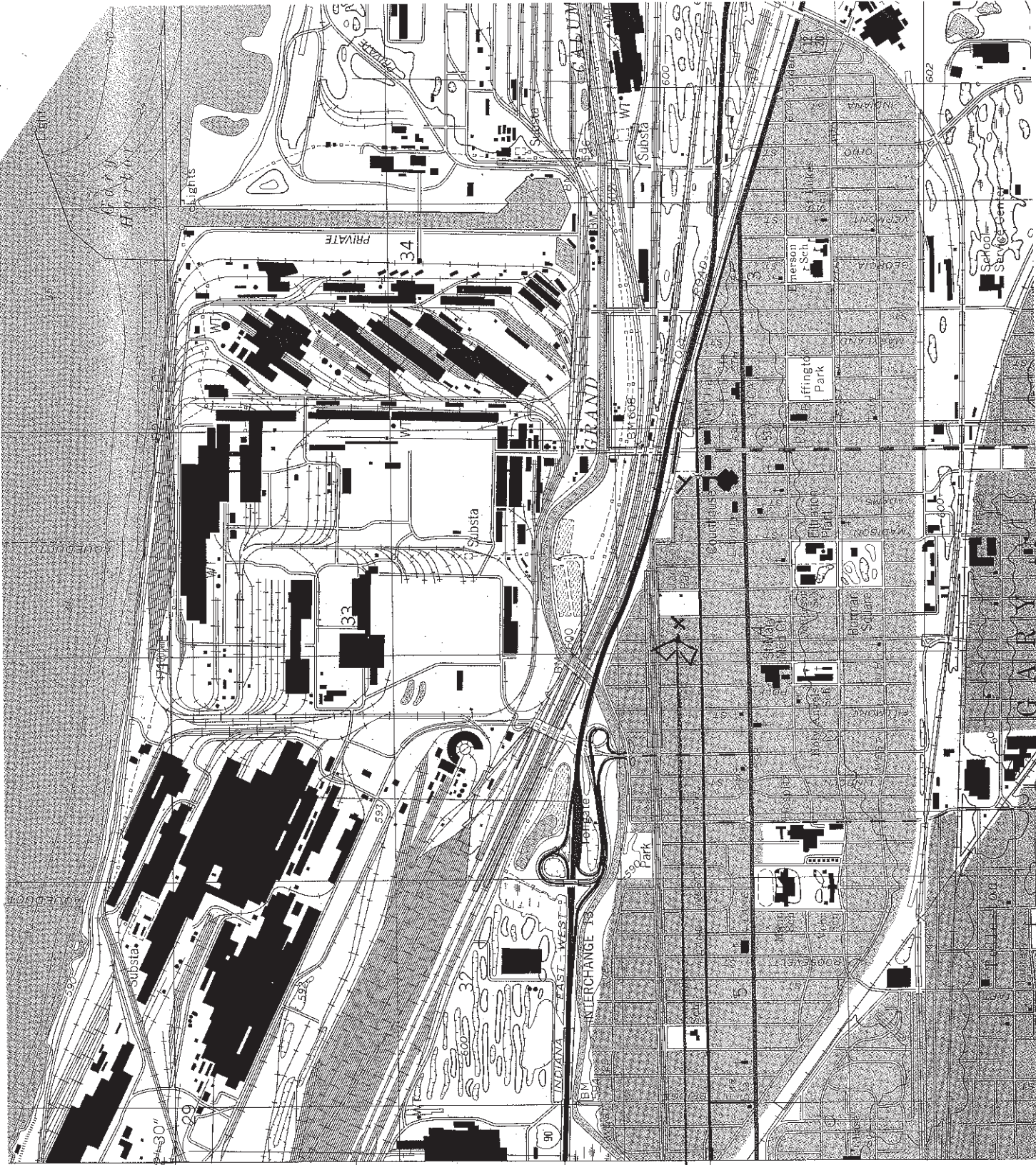


**Van Buren Terrace Historic District**  
**336-354 Van Buren Street**  
**City of Gary**  
**Lake County, Indiana**





UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY



3551 III  
MAN (B)N/L/H/W  
(W) 1199  
87° 2' 30"  
41° 37' 30"  
4608

4607000mN

T. 37 N.

CHICAGO, ILL. (INTERSTATE 94) 22 MI.  
T. 36 N.

VAN BUREN TERRACE  
HISTORIC DISTRICT  
LAKE CO., INDIANA  
16 471440 4605740