



Agenda

Greenville City Council Workshop

May 5, 2025

4:00 PM

City Hall Conference Room 337, 200 West Fifth Street

- I. Call Meeting To Order**
- II. Roll Call**
- III. Approval of Agenda**
- IV. New Business**
 - 1. Presentation on the New Emerald Express Trolley
 - 2. Discussion Regarding a Request to Delay Demolition of the Jacob W. Higgs House - A Historic Landmark Located at 1112 Dickinson Avenue
- V. Adjournment**



City of Greenville, North Carolina

Meeting Date: 05/05/2025

Title of Item: Presentation on the New Emerald Express Trolley

Explanation: The City of Greenville, Greenville-Pitt County Convention and Visitors Bureau, and the Pitt County Arts Council have outlined a framework to share in the purchase of a new trolley. The cost of the new base trolley will be equally divided among the three parties. The Arts Council will cover additional costs for any optional enhancements or improvements they are requesting.

The estimated maintenance costs for the trolley are as follows: Annual fuel cost of \$1,000, Annual general maintenance of approximately \$2,000. This will result in a Driver/Operator charge of \$250 per hour.

The total purchase cost for the trolley will be approximately \$261,605. The approximate funding breakdown will be as follows:

- City of Greenville, NC (General Fund) - \$82,535
- Greenville-Pitt County Convention & Visitors Bureau - \$82,235
- Pitt County Arts Council - \$82,535 + \$14,000 (optional enhancements) = \$96,535

Fiscal Note: The funding breakdown is as follows:

- City of Greenville, NC (General Fund) - \$82,535
- Greenville-Pitt County Convention & Visitors Bureau - \$82,235
- Pitt County Arts Council - \$82,535 + \$14,000 (optional enhancements) = \$96,535

Recommendation: City Council to hear and receive the proposed New Emerald Express Trolley presentation



City of Greenville, North Carolina

Meeting Date: 05/05/2025

Title of Item: Discussion Regarding a Request to Delay Demolition of the Jacob W. Higgs House - A Historic Landmark Located at 1112 Dickinson Avenue

Explanation: The Jacob W. Higgs House, located at 1112 Dickinson Avenue, is a designated Local Historic Landmark in Greenville, North Carolina, built at the turn of the 20th Century. It was designated as a local landmark based on its association with Jacob W. Higgs, a local businessman who engaged in development of several business ventures, including development of the Higgs neighborhood.

The Jacob W. Higgs House is currently pending demolition based on its dilapidated condition. Some notable activities, to date, include:

- On January 11, 2024, City Council adopted an ordinance requiring demolition and removal of the Jacob W. Higgs House based on several challenges, including the dilapidated condition of the structure and inability to repair without significant cost; negative activity; and identification of heirs.
- The property owners were given 60 days to take next steps, including obtaining a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) from the City of Greenville Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) within 30 days from the ordinance, and demolition of the property within 30 days of the COA.
- On March 26, 2024, the City requested a COA from HPC to demolish the property based on City Council's adopted ordinance, and noncompliance by the property owners.
- On June 4, 2024, the HPC adopted a COA approving the demolition, which also included a delay of the demolition for 365 days, as allowed by North Carolina General Statutes. The 365-day delay will expire on or about June 3, 2025.

This discussion will provide an update on the status of the property, including a resolution from the HPC, dated March 26, 2025, requesting that City Council stay the demolition for 12 months to continue working to identify a buyer for preservation, and engagement from Maggie Gregg, Regional Director - Eastern Office with Preservation North Carolina, who has been working to identify a buyer for almost 12 months. This discussion will also provide options for next steps.

Fiscal Note: There is no cost to the City for discussion regarding next steps for the Jacob W. Higgs House.

Recommendation: Evaluate information from City staff and other stakeholders, and provide direction regarding next steps.

ATTACHMENTS

- ☐ [PNC letter to CC for Higgs House.pdf](#)
- ☐ [3-26-2025 HPC Resolution for Higgs House.pdf](#)
- ☐ [May 2025 Update to City Council Higgs House.pdf](#)

Preservation North Carolina

The Historic Preservation Foundation of North Carolina, Inc.

Saving historic places important to the diverse people of North Carolina.



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Tarboro, NC 27886
252-563-5288
mgregg@presnc.org

February 20, 2025

Mayor and Members of the City Council
200 W. 5th Street
Greenville, NC 27834

Dear Mayor and Members of the City Council,

My name is Maggie Gregg and I am the Eastern Office Regional Director for the statewide non-profit historic preservation organization, Preservation North Carolina. This letter is to provide insights into the efforts to find a preservation solution for the historic J.W. Higgs House, one of only 23 Greenville locally designated landmarks, while ensuring it remains secured and safe in the interim.

You first heard from me via email last January, when I learned of the challenges facing the J.W. Higgs House that led to it being slated for demolition. I am so appreciative of the members of city staff and the Historic Preservation Commission who have worked with me to raise awareness of the significance of this property so that we may work to find a preservation solution.

As you may know, one of the initial challenges was identifying and contacting all of the heirs who held an ownership interest in the property. I was able to locate each heir, and they all signed a binding option agreement to sell the property. I am in contact with representatives of both families regularly, and they are eager to see the property sold subject to our protective covenants and rehabilitation agreement.

Another concern regarding the property was eliminating the safety risk to the public and trespassing that resulted in makeshift fires being built in the house. The property was boarded by city staff, and since my involvement starting in January 2024, has remained secured without further intrusion. Deterioration of the structural integrity is limited to a small one-story section in the rear of the house, in a room which was formerly an open porch. The enclosure of that formerly open porch created a roof runoff defect from the two one-story ell's, leading to the deterioration.

One of the unique challenges facing this property has been the street improvement project at Dickinson Avenue, creating a road closure directly in front of the property. While our marketing efforts strongly focus on the connectivity to the revitalization along the Dickinson Avenue corridor and the Arts District, the road construction has challenged potential buyers to fully recognize the location relative to the nearby shopping, dining and entertainment venues. Since the road construction's completion, we have several interested parties who are better able to visualize the opportunities for an adaptive reuse that both supports, and is supported by, those local businesses.

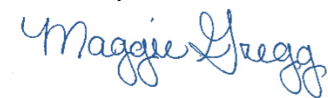
Our marketing of the property includes it being prominently featured on our website and the frequent subject of our weekly emails, which go out to over 7,000 people. In addition, the property has been heavily featured across our social media platforms including Facebook and Instagram, and several others with broad reaching audiences like Circa Old Houses, Old House Life and Cheap Old Houses, resulting in inquiries from across the country. To date, we have had dozens of showings to qualified prospective buyers who expressed interest in purchasing and rehabilitating the property, and we continue receiving new inquiries each week.

In addition to these efforts, the Pitt County Historical Society provided us with the opportunity to partner on a tour of the property in tandem with their annual Thanksgiving Tea in November. That drew a crowd of approximately 75 people, generating local enthusiasm and coverage by local media outlets including WITN and the Daily Reflector. Those efforts further spotlighted the importance of this property and its preservation. We took that opportunity to record a video walk through of the house which is now included on our website. Each of these marketing efforts has resulted in reaching new audiences and generating additional interest and inquiries into the property.

Currently, I am actively working with several parties who are conducting due diligence efforts as they consider an offer to purchase and rehabilitate the house. In addition to the terms included in a traditional real estate offer to purchase, Preservation North Carolina requires a proposed rehabilitation project plan and timeline with offer proposals. At the time of sale, Preservation North Carolina includes protective covenants within the deed and executes a legally binding rehabilitation agreement with the buyer. The covenants not only protect the significant historic architectural elements of the property but also require ongoing maintenance once the rehabilitation is completed.

We have worked diligently to address each of the concerns that led to the demolition order being placed on the J.W. Higgs House as outlined above and continue concerted efforts to secure a preservation-minded buyer who will restore this important Local Landmark. I respectfully request the City Council to consider extending the demolition order deadline to allow us additional time to save the property from demolition. I look forward to continuing to work with city staff on this endeavor and updating the City Council further as progress is made.

Sincerely,



Maggie Gregg
Regional Director, Eastern Office

**RESOLUTION OF THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF GREENVILLE
REQUESTING THE CITY COUNCIL TO NOT DEMOLISH THE JACOB W. HIGGS HOUSE**

WHEREAS, the Historic Preservation Commission of Greenville, North Carolina, was established by the City Council of the City of Greenville on December 8, 1988; and

WHEREAS, the Historic Preservation Commission of the City of Greenville is committed to safeguarding the heritage of the City of Greenville by preserving the character and integrity in historic district and Local Landmarks that embody important elements of its culture, history, or prehistory while also promoting the use and conservation of such historic landmarks for the education, pleasure and enrichment of the residents of the City and the State of North Carolina as a whole; and

WHEREAS, the Jacob W. Higgs House is located at 1112 Dickinson Avenue and was built at the turn of the 20th Century; and

WHEREAS, the Jacob E. Higgs House was designated as a Local Historic Landmark because of its association with Jacob W. Higgs, a local businessman whose notable ventures included a clothing store, a general and grocery business, a furniture store, a textile mill, three banks, and the development of the Higgs neighborhood; and

WHEREAS, the Queen Anne/Colonial Revival architectural style is one of the few remaining intact examples of this style in Greenville and its elaborate double stair and tin-ceiling paneled hallway are unique to the area; and

WHEREAS, G. S. § 160D-1203 and Section 9-1-111 (D)(2), of the Code of the City of Greenville, North Carolina empower the City Council of the City of Greenville to enact this ordinance to authorize and direct the Code Enforcement Supervisor or Officer to demolish and remove a dwelling when the owner has failed to comply with an Order of the Code Enforcement Supervisor or Officer issued pursuant to the provisions of the Minimum Housing Code; and

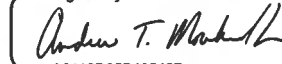
WHEREAS, on January 11, 2024, the Greenville City Council approved an ordinance to require the demolition and removal of the dwelling at 1112 Dickinson Avenue due to its dilapidated current; since that the time, the owners of the property were located and have entered into an agreement with Preservation North Carolina (PNC), a nonprofit whose mission is to save historic properties important to North Carolina, to assist with marketing and selling the property where a preservation easement would be recorded to preserve the structure; and

WHEREAS, PNC has continuously marketed the property on social media, partnered with the Pitt County Historical Society to offer tours of the property as part of its Thanksgiving Tea, and released a video of the property on social media to market the property, conducted walk through/showings with prospective buyers; and

WHEREAS, on June 24, 2024, the Greenville Historic Preservation Commission approved a 365-day delay of demolition as allowed under G. S. § 160D- 949.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Historic Preservation Commission of the City of Greenville respectfully requests the City of Greenville to delay the demolition of the Higgs House for an additional 12 months in order to allow Preservation North Carolina more time to continue to market this important historic property for preservation.

26 March
This the ____ day of ____, 2025.

Signed by:

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Andrew Morehead, Chair
Historic Preservation Commission

ATTEST:

DocuSigned by:

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Blake Privette, Secretary
Historic Preservation Commission

Mayor and Members of City Council

200 W. 5th Street

Greenville, NC 27834

Dear Mayor and Members of City Council,

This letter is a follow up to my prior letter from February 2025 to provide further information and updates regarding the J.W. Higgs House. Since my last correspondence, the property has received an offer and is under contract, with a closing date of May 8, 2025. The buyer, Dickinson Higgs Holding, LLC is owned by Kathryn Ross, an architect with a minor in Historic Preservation with family ties to Greenville. She will be partnering with Matt and Erin Skully on the restoration of the J. W. Higgs House into the Higgs House Inn and Gathering Place, which will provide a space for events and dining downstairs, along with short term stay rooms available upstairs as the Inn. Their vision is for the J.W. Higgs house to become a place for visitors, artists, history lovers and the greater Greenville community to gather.

All offers submitted to Preservation North Carolina require a rehabilitation plan and timeline to be submitted to ensure the project will be accomplished in a timely fashion. Properties are also protected in perpetuity by Covenants, which are attached to the deed at the time of sale. These Covenants protect the significant historic characteristics of both the exterior and interior. I am attaching a copy of the Covenants for the J. W. Higgs House here, which will be recorded at closing.

In addition, a Rehabilitation Agreement is executed between the buyers and Preservation North Carolina at closing. The buyers have given me permission to share some of the details regarding their plans and timeline with you. Soon following closing, the buyer intends to place a construction fence and to put up lights and cameras to further secure the property. Within the first year, the buyer anticipates finishing all major repairs including structural repairs, a new roof, repairing all exterior rot, repairing all windows and doors, and removing the enclosed rear porch. By the end of 2026, the buyer anticipates replacing all systems, including electric, plumbing and HVAC. The proposed opening date of the venue is Spring 2027, with further landscaping and exterior work to be completed by the end of 2027. The buyer will work closing with City of Greenville staff on all necessary permitting and inspection.

Preservation North Carolina is very excited about the restoration plans for this important Local Landmark, and it's continued place of importance in Greenville's history. Once restored the J.W. Higgs house increased value will contribute not only to the community, but it's use as an Inn will bring more occupancy taxes to the area, and provide a walkable place to stay for the business in the Dickinson Avenue Arts District and expand the revitalization in the area. I hope that the Council will share our enthusiasm about the restoration plans for the J.W. Higgs house, and will consider delaying or removing

the demolition order currently in place so that this project can proceed. We look forward to seeing it once again become a vibrant and attractive Landmark for the City of Greenville.

Sincerely,


Maggie Gregg

Regional Director, Eastern Office

Preservation North Carolina