



# PLANNING FOR THE PAST

## Planning for Tourism in Greenville's Dickinson Avenue

April 2023  
Ethan Flower

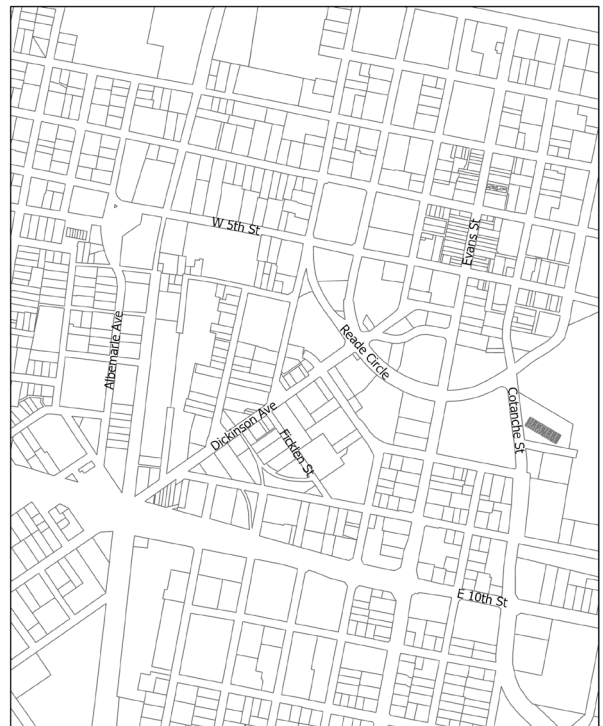
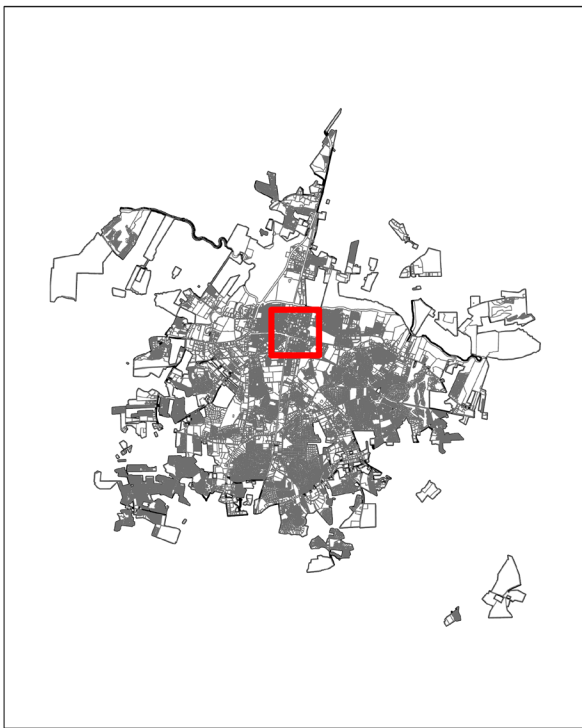
PLAN 4099  
East Carolina University

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Greenville, like the rest of Pitt County, is not the same now as it once was. The structures, murals, shops, installations, and roads that make up Greenville's community are direct reflections of the impacts of that area's cultural history. The local landscapes that highlight a community's individuality are important to preserve and to educate on, but this leaves room for local governments to capitalize on these landscapes as well. Historic preservation, as well as the contemporizing of derelict spaces, both serve an important role in the conservation and protection of community history. Responsibly redeveloping these structures and areas can potentially broaden their appeal to a wider variety of audiences, including both people from Greenville and also people from outside Greenville who bring with them tourist untapped potential tourist revenue.

An analysis was conducted on both art installations and historic structures in the Uptown area of Greenville of potential historical interest. Dickinson Avenue was chosen as the focal point of this analysis due to the road's history of use and of development. Using this analysis, twelve sites were selected to be included in the project, and a map of a walking tour of all of these sites was created. The map includes graphics and images to increase comprehensibility and, therefore, accessibility, as well as a QR code that, when scanned, pulls up an interactive StoryMap that provides even more information about each of the sites, as well as more information about the Dickinson area overall.

The main focus of this project lies in planning for tourism, and the final deliverable products include a thought-out and immediately marketable walking tour of Uptown Greenville's historic sites, as well as an accompanying ESRI StoryMap that provides further background on each of the sites identified on the map. The StoryMap will be linked to by a QR code included on the map to increase accessibility, so that individuals choosing to participate in the tour can choose a paper or a digital map, or both!

# GOALS OF THE PROJECT

## Connecting Places

Create a tourist-friendly map of locally important sites, structures, and installations throughout Greenville's Uptown that can be followed on foot

## Connecting Spaces

Publish an interactive online StoryMap that provides information and graphics that inform about the history of Greenville's Uptown, specifically in the area concentrated around Dickinson Avenue

## Connecting People

Analyze how Greenville is perceived from the tourist perspective, and propose viable community modifications to further Greenville's tourist appeal, emphasizing accessible tourism

Project Sponsorship by Dr. Misun Hur, Ph.D.  
East Carolina University

Project Prepared for the Planning 4099 Practicum  
Course, taught by Mr. Merrill Flood

# INTRODUCTION

## Tourism & Greenville

In Pitt County, as well as all of Eastern North Carolina, Greenville is viewed as a blossoming hub of cultural, academic, political, and professional activity. This is largely due to Greenville being where the main ECU Health hospital - formerly Vidant Health - and East Carolina University are located. As both the hospital and the university continue to grow and to diversify their programs and services, so too will the incoming waves of patrons and potential employees. And so too do Greenville's options for professional-friendly recreation need to be diversified as well.

Concentrated around the main ECU campus, Greenville's Uptown has spent years being shaped into a flourishing multi-use space enjoyable not just by ECU-affiliated individuals, but by general community members as well. Full of art installations, restaurants and eateries, riverfront walking paths, pubs, bars, nightclubs, and shopping areas, Uptown Greenville has matured into an enjoyable space for students, working professionals, retirees, and tourists alike. However, that being said, as Uptown Greenville continues to experience this social-developmental boom, the need for further development in and around the Uptown area has arisen. The development and redevelopment of parcels located in the heart of Greenville's Uptown is very common, and this pattern of development has begun to spill over into other nearby areas of the community.

For decades, Dickinson Avenue has served as a vital thoroughfare for Greenville, linking the constantly developing Uptown area with the more historic residential areas in the eastern part of the city. The importance of this stretch of

road has only been reinforced, as it was granted a protected status as a National Historic District in 2007, after a local campaign for its addition to the register was started the year prior (North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office). Validation for the Dickinson area being granted this historic district status can be found in the area's rich cultural background, as well as its importance to Greenville's political development and African American community. Much of Greenville's rapid development has been attributed, at least partially, to industrial activities in the tobacco warehousing area along Dickinson (Ohono & Barnes, 1988). The area also features several historic structures, as well as numerous community-sponsored art installations and murals.

Tourism, tourist-friendly activities, and attractions are all undeniably important to the formative well-being of all cities, Greenville being no exception. Tourist revenue represents a large portion of total citywide income in most areas of the county, and the presence of tourist-friendly activities generates jobs at the local level. As of 2022, an approximated 197,500 people living in North Carolina were employed in tourist-centric occupations, which was a 10.5% increase from the year prior (Jones, 2022). The prior year - 2021 - total net tourist-generated revenue for the entire state reached approximately \$28.9 billion.

These numbers illustrate a growing domestic tourist base interested in traveling to or, at the very least through, North Carolina. This is a projected wave that Greenville can capitalize on, and cultural resources are some of the most attractive resources a community can offer to a potential tourist planning their trip. This principle is why places like museums have historically done so well - people want access to learn about a community's past, and they want to do it on their own time.

# Tourism in numbers, Post-COVID

Like every other area of the country, domestic and international tourism in and out of Greenville came to a total halt in early 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic initially came to the U.S. This halt of what is normally a typical flow of people in and out of Greenville caused an overall loss of revenue that Greenville, like every other city, largely depends on.

## The Numbers\*

- In 2021, total tourist spending in Greenville hit approximately \$257 million, which marked a 41.9% increase from the year prior
- In 2021, an approximated \$63 million was recorded on payroll for jobs in Pitt County's tourism industry
- There has been an approximated 10.5% increase in employment rates in tourist businesses between the years of 2020 and 2021 for Pitt County
- Out of North Carolina's 100 total counties, Pitt County is ranked 27th in net tourist spending
- In North Carolina, out of state visitors spend more than \$79 million a day - Greenville can tap into this visitor base by utilizing its natural resources to appeal to the observant tourist

\* Data gathered from the official Visit Greenville website



# TOOLS FOR THE UTILIZATION OF BUILT SPACES

## Historic Preservation

Historic preservation is a tool that, when properly used at the discretion of a planning professional, provides a way for human beings to communicate contemporary facts and understanding about the current day to future generations. The utilization of historic preservation policy has many benefits, for both the private and public sectors, such as cutting back on overall resource consumption and using less energy than the demolition alternative. It is recognized by the City of Greenville as “a vital tool for protecting the city’s heritage, revitalizing its neighborhoods, enhancing quality of life in Greenville, and stimulating economic development in the region” (Advisory Council on Historic Preservation). Protecting older structures from being structurally modified or otherwise modernized ensures that a community has the ability to generate history-based tourist appeal indefinitely.

## Redevelopment

Not all spaces need to be or deserve to be preserved. Sometimes, total or partial redevelopment of the structure of an area is decided upon as being the best course of action to ensure a property properly meshes with its surroundings, either physically or economically.

Dickinson Avenue has been largely redeveloped, and it remains largely under development currently. NC DOT has approved an ongoing street resurfacing and streetscape improvement project spanning approximately 1.3 miles of Dickinson

Avenue - from Memorial Dr. to Reade Circle (NCDOT, 2021). Improvements are projected to include the following:

- Sidewalk leveling and improvements
- Repairs to the storm drainage system
- Gutter improvements
- Road repaving
- Water and sewer lines are to be replaced

The project is set to be fully completed in 2025.

East Carolina University's Intersect East campus covers approximately 19 acres between Greenville's Uptown and Dickinson Avenue. It serves as a prime example of responsible redevelopment in the area, as its' plans consider historic-cultural importance as well as modern-day utilitarian necessity. Located in the former warehouse district, the plans for this space now promise to create up to 1,500 jobs and generate more than \$141 million annually for the area (Smith, 2021).

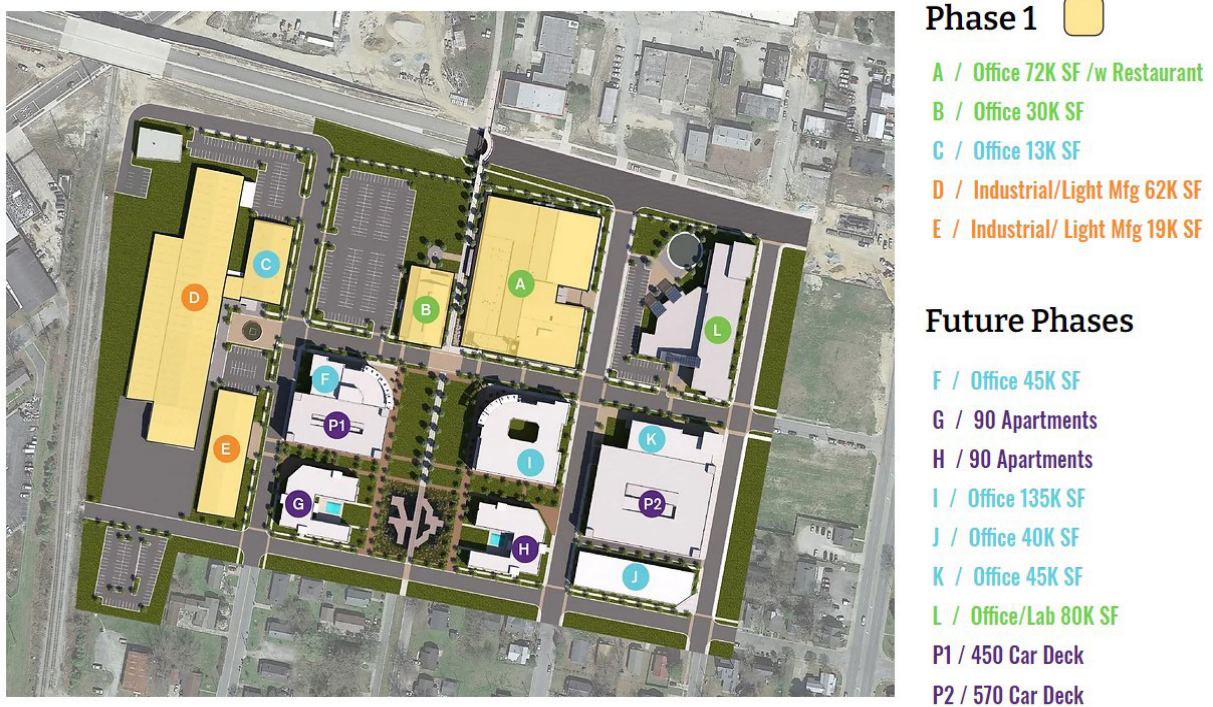


Fig. 1 Map of Projected Intersect East Layout  
Source: <https://www.intersecteast.com/about-us>

# Walking Tours

Providing interested parties with pre-established walking trails or tour paths has the double benefits of promoting both historical awareness and active recreational activity. They also appeal to both tourist parties and local individuals for both of these same reasons. It is not uncommon for cities trying to promote activity within their urban core to offer pre-established self-guided tour paths - New Bern, San Francisco, and Greenville, South Carolina all offer these types of options. Offering these options for community-based recreational activity allows for cities to promote their local history and character to outside parties while simultaneously encourage individuals to engage in physical activity. A survey of potential sites of interest locally in Greenville was conducted, and a proposed walking map of twelve such sites was created, potentially allowing Greenville to further promote physical activity, recreation, and tourism. Having these types of paths accessible to the public allow for opportunities for historical education, as well as for physical exercise.

## Case Study: Downtown Dayton, OH Uses Graphic Mapping to Showcase Local Culture in 'Art Walk'

Dayton is one of the largest cities in the state of Ohio, with more than 55 square miles of incorporated land currently being used. As of 2023, the population of Dayton has hit approximately over 130,000, with a relatively even dispersion in the male-to-female ratio.

To engage their citizens, as well as to foster a strong tourist community, the city of Dayton offers self-guided tours of local art exhibitions and murals created by local artists. By allowing individuals and groups to be self-guided, the city provided a more accessible way for people to experience the local appeal of Dayton.

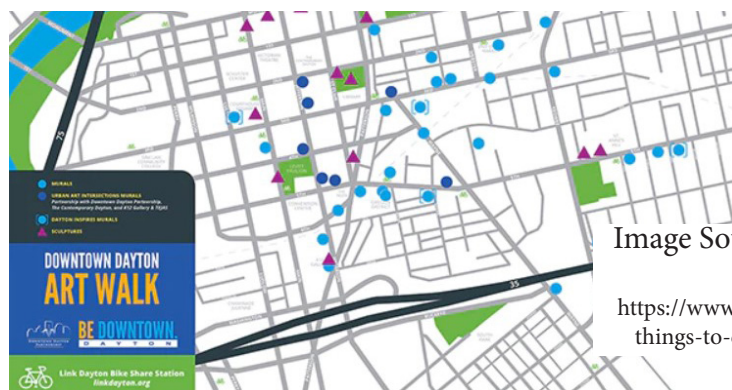
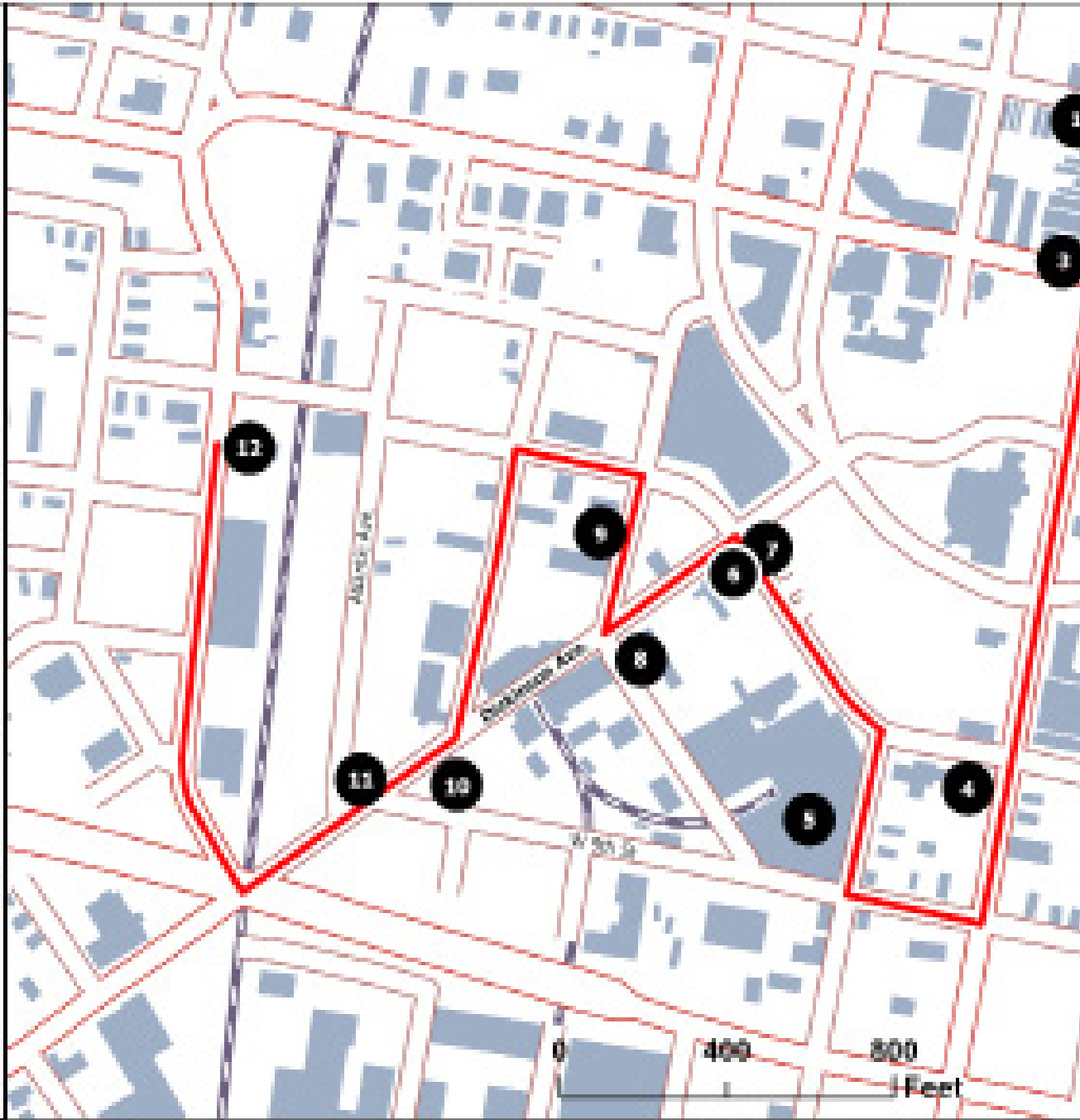


Image Source: Dayton, OH  
Website  
[https://www.downtowndayton.org/  
things-to-do/self-guided-tours/](https://www.downtowndayton.org/things-to-do/self-guided-tours/)

# WELCOME TO



### **Live United Courtyard**

4th St. between Evans St. & Washington St.



### **Five Points Plaza Archway Public Art Project**

Starlight Café



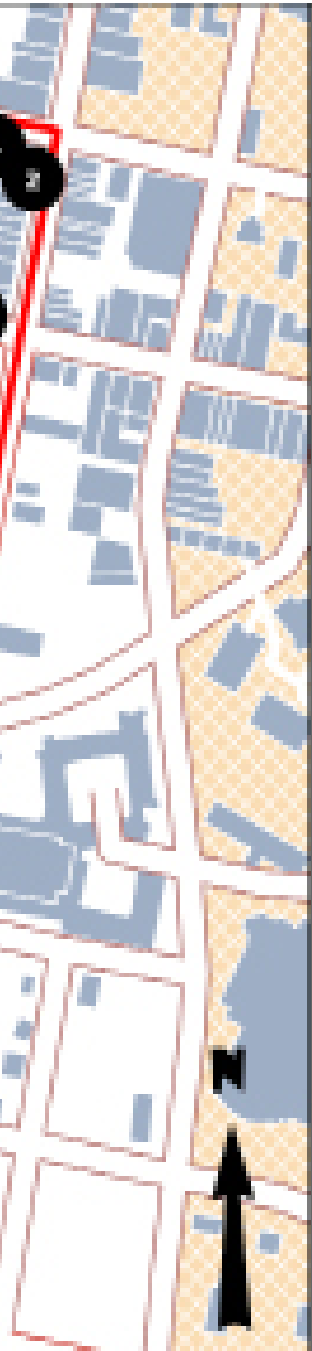
### **Emerge Gallery & Art Center**

404 Evans St.



### **Greenville Museum of Art**

802 Evans St.



# HISTORIC UPTOWN GREENVILLE



**Brown Building**

631 Dickinson Ave.



**"School of Flying Fish" by Scott Eagle**

729 Dickinson Ave.



**"Billy Taylor" by Jason Coale**

628 S Pitt St.



**Hines Building**

905 Dickinson Ave.



**Animal Farm Sculptures by Jonathan Bowling**

811 Dickinson Ave.



**Roxy Theater**

629 Albemarle Ave.



**Smith-Williams Building**

Corner of Ficklen St. & W 9th St.



**Higgs & Taft Building**

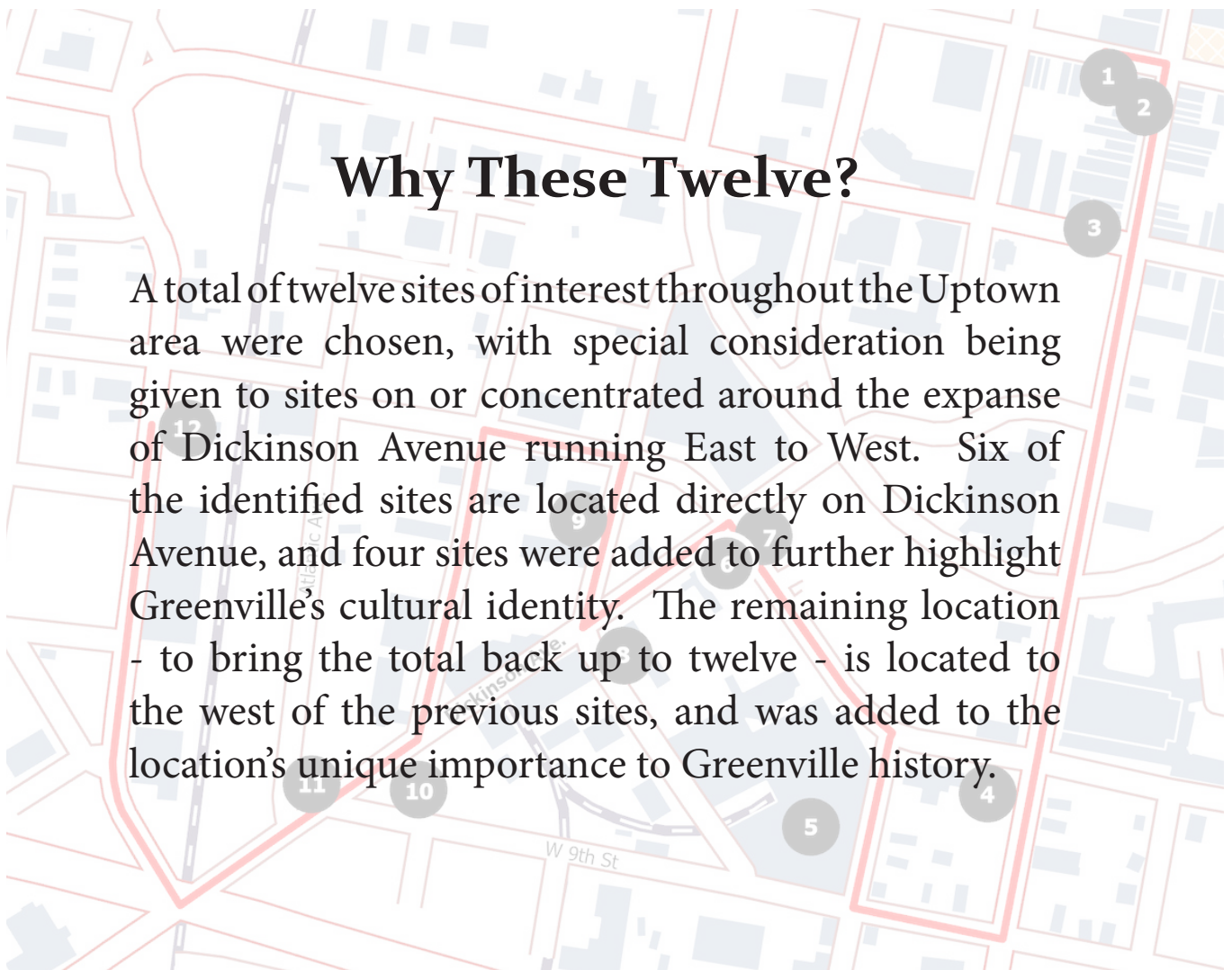
701 Dickinson Ave.



# THE TWELVE SITES

## Why These Twelve?

A total of twelve sites of interest throughout the Uptown area were chosen, with special consideration being given to sites on or concentrated around the expanse of Dickinson Avenue running East to West. Six of the identified sites are located directly on Dickinson Avenue, and four sites were added to further highlight Greenville's cultural identity. The remaining location - to bring the total back up to twelve - is located to the west of the previous sites, and was added to the location's unique importance to Greenville history.





### Site 1 - Live United Courtyard

- 4th St., between Evans St. and Washington St.
- A “pocket park” in Greenville’s Upton meant to integrate accessible open space with a heavily commercial area
- Features installations by local artists, as well as interactive activities that engage youth



### Site 2 - Emerge Gallery & Art Center

- 404 Evans St.
- Local headquarters of the Pitt County Arts Council
- Displays art by local artists inside and outside, also sponsors art installations all over Pitt County



### Site 3 - Five Points Plaza Archway Public Art Project

- 104 W. 5th St.
- Sponsored by the Pitt County Arts Council at Emerge, this series of archway murals is changed every one to three years



#### Site 4 - Greenville Museum of Art

- 802 Evans St.
- Currently featuring five exhibits showing the work of local artists, with other exhibits being added regularly



#### Site 5 - Smith-Williams Building

- Corner of Ficklen St. & W. 9th St.
- Marks the beginning of the Greenville Tobacco Warehouse Historic District



#### Site 6 - Higgs & Taft Building

- 701 Dickinson Ave.
- Built in 1916 as a furniture display gallery for the company of the same name
- Currently the Dickinson Avenue Antique Market





### Site 7 - Brown Building

- 631 Dickinson Ave.
- Built in 1923 and has been owned by numerous commercial retailers throughout the decades
- Currently Taft Family Ventures, a local real estate investment firm
- Outside of the building features Dia de Los Muertos mural by a local artist celebrating Hispanic cultures in North Carolina



### Site 8 - “School of Flying Fish” Mural

- 729 Dickinson Ave.
- Painted by local artist and ECU faculty member Scott Eagle, this mural is painted in his unique personal style
- Similar murals to this have been displayed around the world



### Site 9 - “Billy Taylor” Mural

- 628 S. Pitt St.
- Showcases Greenville native, ECU faculty member, and African American trailblazing jazz pianist Dr. Billy Taylor
- Painted by local Director of the Whirligig Stage, Jason Coale



### Site 10 - Hines Building

- 905 Dickinson Ave.
- Currently this site is vacant and unused
- This structure was cited in the application for Dickinson's addition to the register of National Historic Districts as being architecturally and culturally important to Greenville's past



### Site 11 - Animal Farm Sculptures

- 811 Dickinson Ave.
- An installation in the signature style of local sculptural artist Jonathan Bowling, this area of Dickinson is totally covered in sculptures of animals, figures, and mythological beasts
- These sculptures are available for purchase by individuals by directly contacting the artist



### Site 12 - Roxy Theater

- 629 Albemarle Ave.
- Opened in 1948 to provide Greenville's African American population with a live arts venue, this structure is still open for community events, as well as church meetings

# More Information About the Map's Features

- On foot, the entire tour - from site 1 to site 12 - is projected to take approximately 1 hour
- This tour is physically accessible to individuals and groups of all levels of physical ability
- Directs map users through the commercial area of the Uptown in an attempt to generate tourist revenue for local businesses
- Printed map features a QR code that links to informational online StoryMap with a digital version of the map with larger letter and graphic sizes to increase usability and accessibility

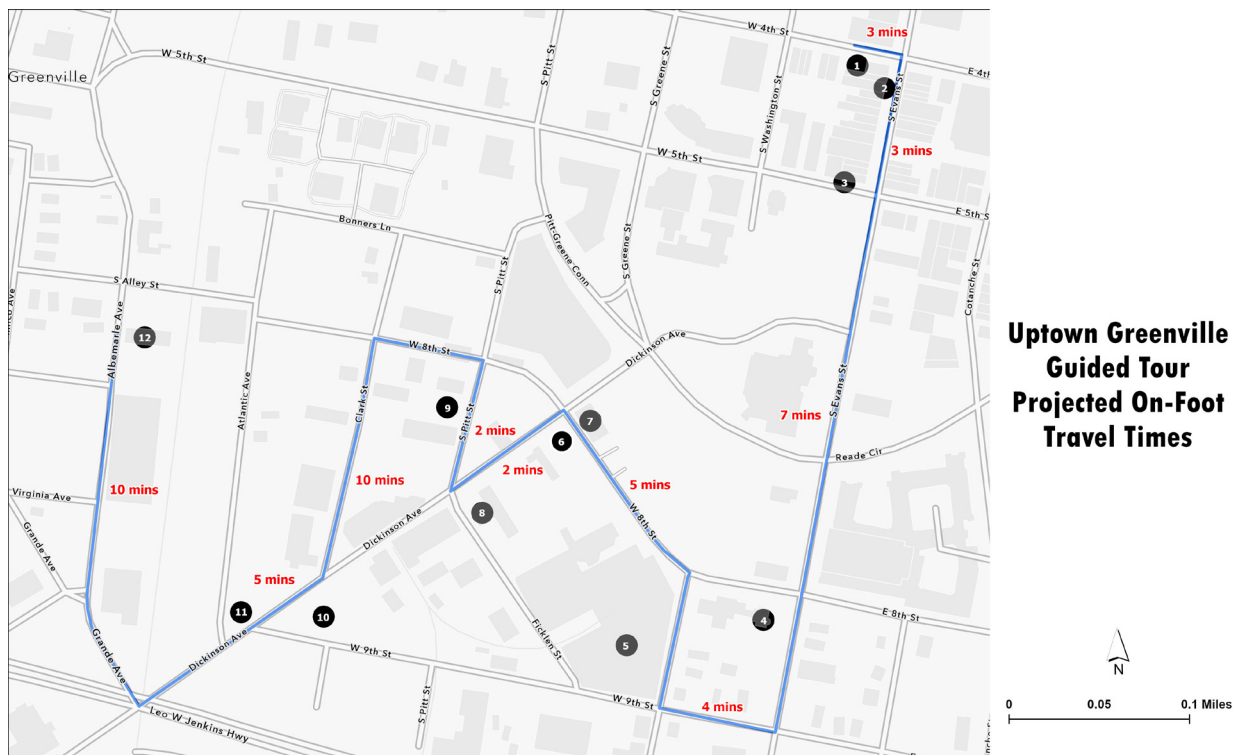


Fig. 3

# ADVANCING TOURIST APPEAL & ACCESSIBILITY

## ArcGIS StoryMaps

The main benefit of using ArcGIS StoryMaps for analysts is that they provide a large degree of convenience, as well as an ease of access that allows for any results to be easily communicated to the intended audience. Additionally, this program provides an abundance of mapping tools meant to assist individuals in their creation of content-based stories that can be published online. The creator of the project can choose with whom they share it, either to the creator's own organization or to online public access, which makes it available to all people with an internet browser.

To build off of the accessibility granted by ArcGIS StoryMaps, a StoryMap was created to go along with this document. It provides additional photographs of the locations, as well as more information on the greater topic. Individuals may access this StoryMap by scanning the QR code present on the lower right corner of walking map, or by scanning the same QR code below:



## Further Recommendations

Greenville - specifically in the Uptown area - is still largely under development in many areas. Greenville's current path is one of contemporarization, as existing spaces are being redeveloped to create room for more temporarily relevant structures and buildings. As this development continues, it becomes necessary to

steer development activity in ways that maximize community wellbeing, as well as public accessibility to these spaces.

In an effort to continue facilitating the correct community changes, as well as to incentivize the further promotion of tourism in Greenville, three additional recommendations have been made. They are as follows:

Recommendation 1 - Renovate the currently vacant Hines Building into a space suitable either for commercial development as a closed market or as a form of community gathering space.

Recommendation 2 - Install small, 4 in. x 4 in. metal signs at select locations throughout the proposed tour path showing the QR code linking to the StoryMap including the digital map as a means to simultaneously promote education on local history and the tour itself as a recreational option throughout the community. The signage can be mounted on a nearby wall for convenience, or as a standalone. Signage subject to permitted approval.

Recommendation 3 - Add the Greenville Museum of Art to Greenville's online "Things To Do" list, which already features a "Museums" subtab.

## Signage Funding

When a place is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, money is not allocated for historic signage. Communities can apply for signage funding through the National Register Signage Grant Program. Certified local governments may also apply for a "Pass-Through Fund" through the State Historic Preservation Office. These grants are only made available to local governments - no private parties are allowed to compete for the funding.

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