

AGENDA ITEM: 9

LANDMARKS MEETING: December 22, 2022

CASE NUMBER: NR 2022-006

LOCATION: 492 Vance Avenue

HISTORIC NAME: The Griggs Business and Practical Arts College

APPLICANT: 492 Vance, LLC

REPRESENTATIVE: Stephanie Wade

REQUEST: Nomination of an individual listing to be placed on the National Register of Historic Places

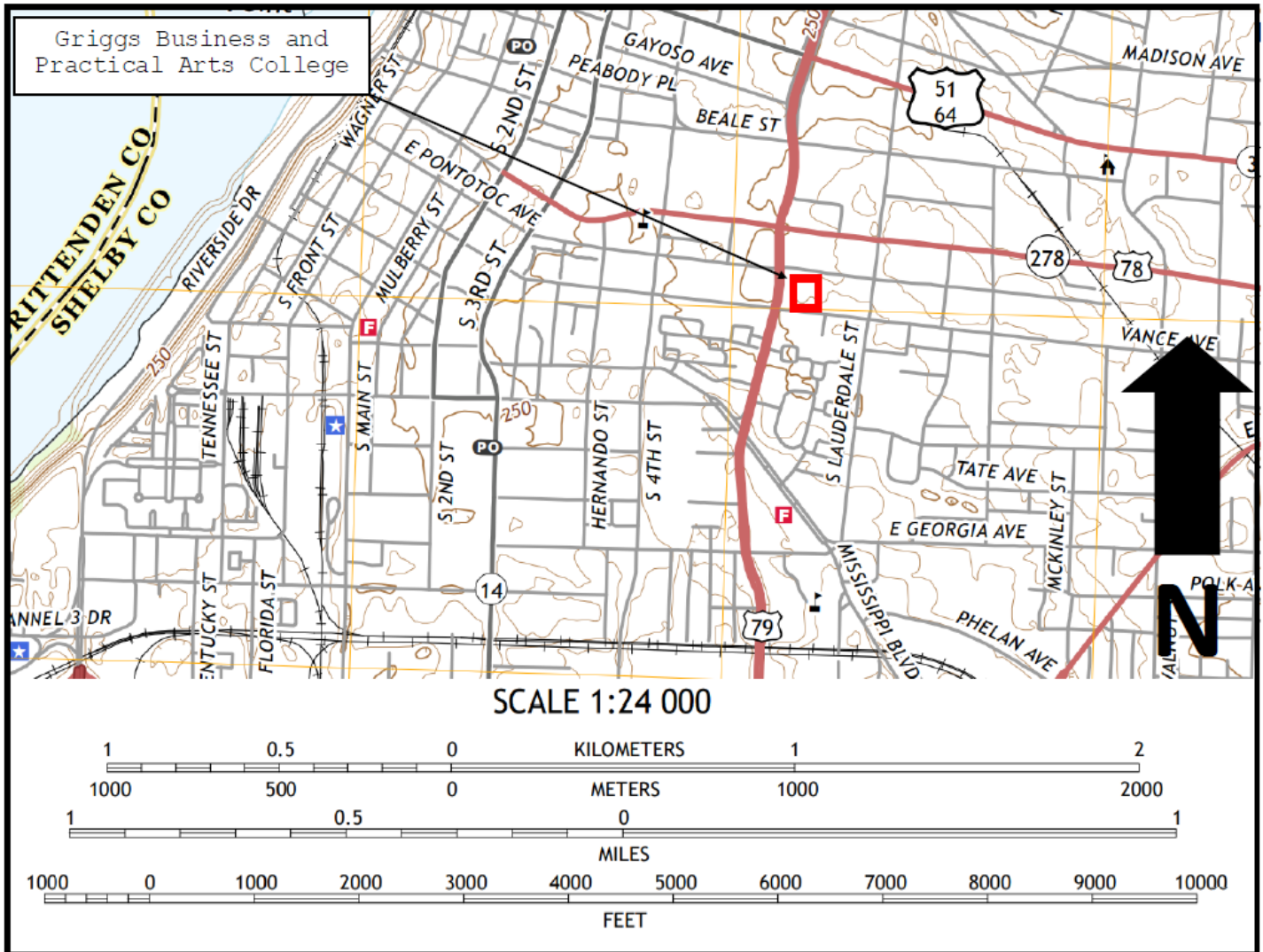
CONCLUSIONS:

1. Subject property is the Griggs Business and Practical Arts College which is located at 492 Vance Avenue in Memphis. It was once part of the Vance-Pontotoc Historic District, which was listed on 3/19/1980, and delisted on 3/18/1987.
2. The nomination includes individual listing of the Griggs Business and Practical Arts College to be placed on the National Register of Historic Places.
3. The review and decision of the Memphis Landmarks Commission is only to determine if the property merits being placed on the National Register. The decision of whether the property is listed in the National Register lies with the Tennessee Historic Commission and the National Park Service.

RECOMMENDATION:

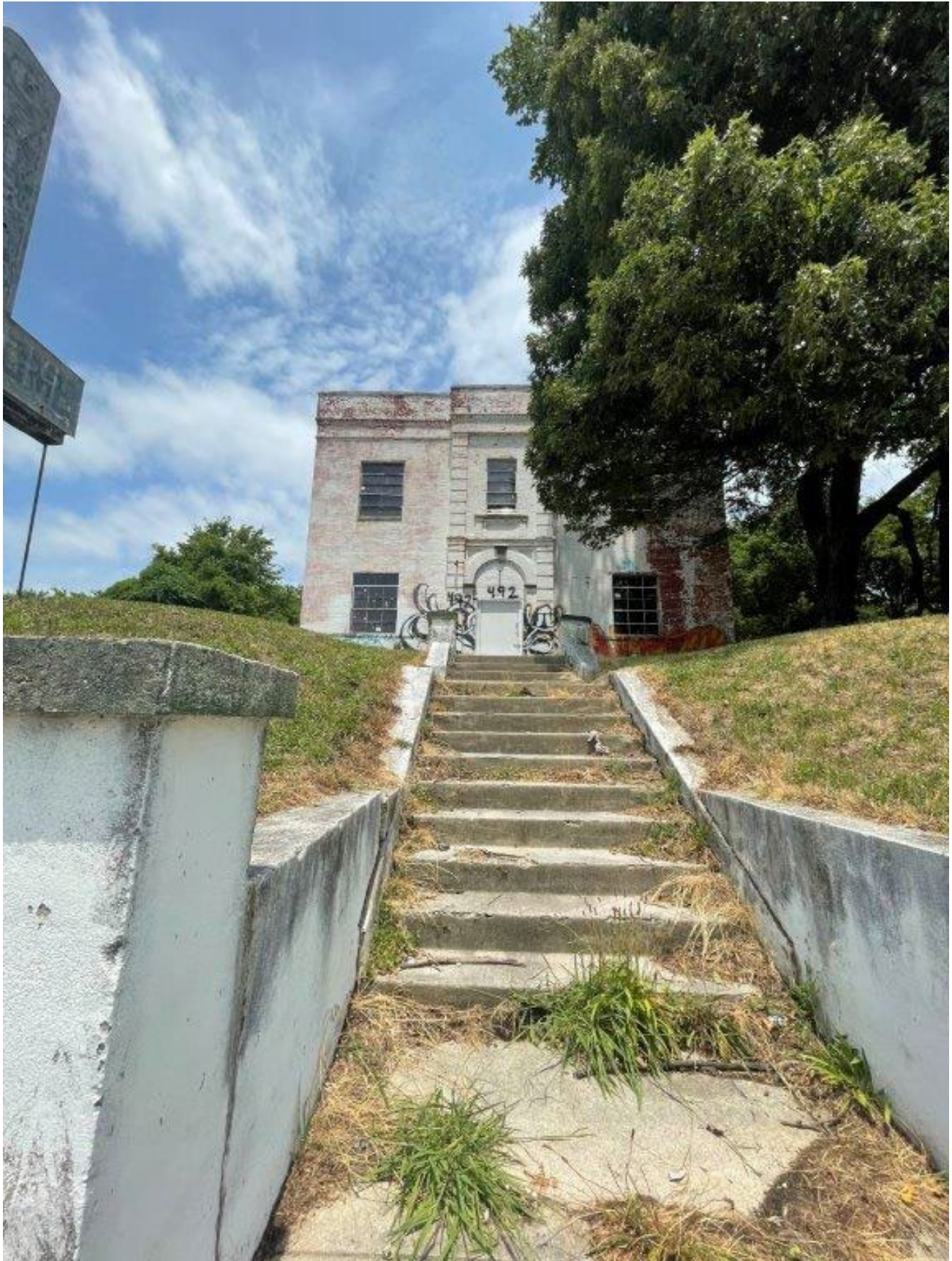
Approval

USGS Topographic Map



Northwest Memphis, TN, AR, 2019. The location of the Griggs Business and Practical Arts College is illustrated with a red square.

CURRENT PHOTO OF THE STRUCTURE



STAFF ANALYSIS

Narrative Summary *(As Stated in the Application)*

The Griggs Business and Practical Arts College is located at 492 Vance Avenue in Memphis. It was once part of the Vance-Pontotoc Historic District (NR Listed 3/19/1980, Delisted 3/18/1987). It is surrounded primarily by residential and commercial buildings. The College is situated upon a roughly half-acre tract of land, all of which is historically associated with the College during its Period of Significance. Other contributing resources on the property include the Griggs Business and Practical Arts College Sign, erected ca. 1949. The College is a two story, rectangular, Italianate, brick buildings set upon a concrete foundation and capped with a flat, asphalt shingle roof. Prominent architectural details include the dentils, pilasters, and arched doorway. There have been several alterations over the years. The upper portion of the entrance was enclosed and replaced with glass and steel frame doors prior to the 1980s, which themselves have been replaced with a modern metal door. Sanborn maps indicate that a two-story, L-shaped projection was located on the north elevation of the house until a second, two-story addition was constructed on the same elevation sometime between 1907-1950. This addition gave the buildings its current rectangular shape. Many of these changes occurred either during the property's Period of Significance or facilitated the use of the property as the Griggs Business and Practical Arts College campus.

Statement of Significance Summary *(As Stated in the Application)*

The Griggs Business and Practical Arts College is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its significance in African American history and education. Located in a historically Black neighborhood, the Griggs Business and Practical Arts College offered Black Memphians an opportunity to gain practical training for working- and middle-class jobs at a time when Black neighborhoods like Vance-Pontotoc were being decimated by Urban Renewal programs. The nominated property was constructed in 1858 and initially served as the private residence for John Gregory and Elizabeth Stovall. In 1949, the nominated property was purchased by Reverend S.A. Owen and C.J. Gaston to serve as the campus for Griggs Business and Practical Arts College. The College itself was founded at a different location in 1944 by Emma Griggs, a civil rights activist, educator, and entrepreneur before its move to 492 Vance Avenue. Emma operated several earlier iterations of the College in Houston, Texas, Nashville, and Memphis. The College lost its accreditation in 1971 and was sold to the Bluff City Lodge #96 Improved Benevolent Protective Order of Elks of the World on April 5, 1974. The Period of Significance (1949-1974) reflects the year that the property was acquired by the College, and the year that it was sold to the Bluff City Lodge.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends **approval** of individual listing of the Griggs Business and Practical Arts College to be placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

APPLICATION

See complete application here: <https://shelbycountyttn.gov/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/12448>