



## SAVANNAH-CHATHAM COUNTY HISTORIC SITE AND MONUMENT COMMISSION

### HONORARY STREET DESIGNATION RECOMMENDATION

**PETITIONER:** Doretha Rice & Jaceln Johnson

**FILE No.:** 25-001257-HM

**LOCATION:** Essex Avenue between 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue and Corvair Street

**DATE:** April 3, 2025

#### **NATURE OF REQUEST:**

The applicant is requesting approval of an honorary street designation on a portion of Essex Avenue to have an honorary name of “Annie B. Graham Street”. The proposed designation would cover the portion of Essex Avenue between 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue and Corvair Street.

As per the applicant:

“An Honorary Street Designation for Annie Bell Graham within Tremont Park neighborhood. Located on Essex Street between 2<sup>nd</sup> and Corvair Streets.”

#### **FINDINGS:**

The following standards apply:

##### ***Article E- Naming and Renaming of Public Property, Facilities and Streets.***

***General policy.*** As a general policy, the Mayor and Aldermen find that public property should be named after its principal function, location, or historical reference; however, significant community events, organizations or well-known persons with important contributions to the community, state or nation may deserve public recognition, which may occur by way of naming or renaming public rights-of-way or facilities.

##### ***Naming criteria and requirements.***

***Criteria.*** Naming or renaming of a public right-of-way or facility shall occur only when the proposed naming or renaming satisfied at least one of the following criteria:

*It honors and commemorates a noteworthy person associated with the City of Savannah, Chatham County, the State of Georgia or the United States of America;*

The standard is met. Annie Bell Graham had a notable impact on the Tremont Park neighborhood in the City of Savannah through her six decade involvement with the Tremont Park Missionary Baptist Church, as a community organizer for the residents of Tremont Park, and notably through her providing of childcare to hundreds.

*It commemorates local history, places, events or culture;  
It will strengthen neighborhood identity; or  
It recognizes native wildlife or natural geographical features.*

The standard is met. It commemorates the local history of the area and will strengthen the neighborhood identity through bringing attention to the local efforts of Annie Bell Graham.

***Exclusions.*** *The following shall not be considered for purposes of naming or renaming:*

*Persons that resided in the City of Savannah for less than five years, other than prominent national figures;*

The standard is met. Annie Bell Graham lived in Savannah for decades and had a notable impact on the lives of the residents of the Tremont Park neighborhood and the City of Savannah.

*Names assigned to existing public property within the City or unincorporated Chatham County where duplication of the name is likely to lead to confusion; and*

The standards is met. Staff is not aware of any other existing public property with a name duplication.

*Except as set forth in Section 4-1106 of this Article, commercial names where usage of such name would amount to advertising.*

The standard is met. This is not advertising.

***Considerations.*** *Naming requests shall consider:*

*The number of residents and businesses directly affected;*

*Community diversity;*

*The historical significance of preexisting name or location;*

*The appropriateness and compatibility of the request in relation to the existing area;*

*The impact on emergency service delivery; and*

*Continuity and stability.*

The standard does not apply as the honorary street naming will not change the official name of Essex Avenue between 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue and Corvair Street. However, it will allow for the acknowledgment of the contributions of Annie Bell Graham to the Tremont Park neighborhood and to the City of Savannah.

***Additional considerations for persons.*** *Requests to name a public right-of-way or facility in honor of a natural person should also consider the following:*

*Absent extraordinary or extenuating circumstances, the proposed honoree shall be deceased;*

*Whether the proposed namesake made a sustained contribution over an appreciable time period, exerted efforts of benefit or significance to local, state or*

*national affairs and/or demonstrated leadership in governmental, cultural or historical affairs, humanitarian efforts, or community development;*

*Contributions that beneficially changed the nature and characteristics of the community; and*

*Achievement by a native Savannahian of national or international acclaim in a specific field of endeavor that has reflected positively on Savannah.*

Honorary street names are symbolic and do not change the official name of the street. Annie Bell Graham is deceased, and through her work in the community had a notable impact on the Tremont Park neighborhood and the City of Savannah, including her work with the Tremont Park Missionary Baptist Church, as a community organizer including her work to secure the funding for the Tremont Park Community Center, and notably her tireless commitment to children through her providing of childcare for hundreds.

***Renaming of public property facilities or streets.*** *All requests to rename public property shall be made in writing and directed to the attention of the City Manager. Such requests shall include:*

***In the instance of a park, playground, trail, recreational area or space;***

*A supporting petition signed by not less than 51 percent of all property owners abutting the subject property;*

*The present official name of the property;*

*The proposed new name;*

*The specific location of the property;*

*The name address and telephone number of the person requesting the name change;*

As part of the submission, the applicants included the names of the property owners abutting the subject right-of-way and a signed petition showing the support of 58% which meets the threshold requirements for approval from the City.

*A statement of reasons supporting the renaming request;*

Per the applicant, “Mrs. Annie Bell Graham’s legacy endures through countless lives she touched. She is a true legend and will forever be known as the “Matriarch of Tremont Park”.”

*A thorough discussion regarding the history of the property, including all prior names associated therewith; and*

The standard does not apply to this situation because an honorary renaming does not affect the legal name of the street, however, the applicant provided a history of the impact of Annie Bell Graham on the Tremont Park neighborhood and the City of Savannah.

*An endorsement by the current Mayor, an at-large alderman or the alderman representing the district in which the property is located.*

The City of Savannah, Alderwoman Alicia Miller Blakley, is endorsing this honorary street designation.

**PUBLIC NOTICE:**

As required in the Master Plan and Guidelines, written notice was sent to all property owners, and the neighborhood association, within 200 feet of the subject property. A sign was posted on the property fifteen days prior to the meeting. As of the writing of this report no comments were received from the public.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

**Staff recommends that the Historic Site and Monument Commission recommend approval to the Savannah City Council for an Honorary Street Designation as requested because the proposed honorary street designation meets the standards within *Article E- Naming and Renaming of Public Property, Facilities and Streets*.**

**MW: JM**