

**SAVANNAH HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
CUYLER-BROWNVILLE HISTORIC DISTRICT
CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS**

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

PETITIONER: Thomas Cribbs
FILE NO.: 21-004448-COA
PROPERTY ADDRESS: 1509 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd
PIN: 20066 09003
ZONING: TC-2
STAFF REVIEWER: Olivia Arfuso
DATE: August 25, 2021

NATURE OF REQUEST:

The petitioner is requesting approval for the demolition of a non-contributing structure at **1509 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.**

CONTEXT:

Along with many other buildings, a text amendment was recently approved by City Council to add **1509 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.** as a contributing resource to the Cuyler-Brownville Historic Resources Map. However, the text amendment will not go into effect until **September 1, 2021.**

Since this non-contributing resource was previously evaluated and deemed to be of contributing status, Staff will be considering the building worthy of preservation and classified as “historic” for purposes hereunder.

On **December 1, 2020**, the City of Savannah’s Code Compliance determined that the property was “Condemned” and “Unfit for Human Habitation”.

On **April 16, 2021**, Staff met with the petitioner on-site. The building was vacant and in a state of deterioration; however, Staff was not made aware of the previous fire or the prior order of condemnation by Code Compliance. Staff examined the building thoroughly from the exterior and did not see exterior evidence of recent fire or roof collapse.

FINDINGS:

The building was constructed in **1930** and is not currently listed as a contributing resources within the National Register Cuyler-Brownville Historic District or the local Cuyler-Brownville Historic

Staff Recommendation – Petition of Thomas Cribbs
Address 1509 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
File No. 21-004448-COA
Date August 25, 2021
Page 2

District. A recent Cuyler-Brownville Historic District survey update identified that the building was constructed within the current Period of Significance.

The building is visible on the **1954 Sanborn Map** as a small frame structure that is noted as being a “Filling Station.” A one-story frame shade structure is added to the front of the property and is visible on the **1973 Sanborn Map**.

The following standards from the Sec 3.18.8 - HPC Criteria for Relocation or Demolition apply:

Criteria for Relocation or Demolition.

Evaluation Required. Any non-contributing resource must first be evaluated and considered for contributing status prior to issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness for relocation or demolition (See Sec. 3.16.4.b.).

Sec. 3.16.4.b. Classification of Resources and Criteria for Resource Designation. All resources within the District shall be classified and designated on the District’s “Historic District Contributing Resources Map.” All resources shall be identified as contributing or non-contributing as follows:

Contributing. All resources identified on the “Historic District Contributing Resources Map” having historic significance shall be considered “contributing” and worthy of preservation and shall be classified as “historic” for purposes hereunder.

Period of Significance. Contributing buildings include those within the current Period of Significance, possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and meet one or more of the following criteria:

Are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or

Are associated with the lives of significant persons in our past; or

Embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or

Have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in historic or prehistory.

Exceptional Importance. Contributing buildings include a select group of exceptional resources constructed outside the district’s Period of Significance. These resources possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and meet one or more of the above criteria.

Non-Contributing. New construction and all resources identified as non-contributing on the “Historic District Contributing Resources Map” are classified as non-historic for zoning purposed hereunder.

Should the resource meet the criteria for contributing status, the criteria for relocating or demolishing a contributing resource shall apply.

A text amendment was recently approved by City Council to add **1509 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.** as a contributing resource to the Cuyler-Brownville Historic Resources Map. However, the text amendment will not go into effect until **September 1, 2021**.

Staff Recommendation – Petition of Thomas Cribbs
Address 1509 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
File No. 21-004448-COA
Date August 25, 2021
Page 3

Staff will be considering the building worthy of preservation and classified as “historic” for purposes hereunder.

***Criteria.** The Historic Preservation Commission shall determine that at least one of the criteria below has been satisfied when a contributing resource is proposed for relocation or demolition.*

The relocation or demolition is required to alleviate an immediate threat to public health or public safety;

The relocation is required to avoid demolition;

The relocation or demolition is required to avoid exceptional practical difficulty or undue hardship upon the owner of the property if all the following conditions are also satisfied:

The applicant has provided evidence sufficient to demonstrate that the application of the standards of this Section deprives the applicant of reasonable economic return on the subject property; and

The undue hardship is not of the property owner’s own making.

Sufficient evidence has been provided to demonstrate that the application of the standards of this section deprives the petitioner of reasonable economic return on the subject property. An invoice from *Joe Marchese Commercial Construction* quoted the necessary repairs and reconstruction at **\$433,182.30**. *Honey Bear Wrecking* also quoted the petitioner \$5,800 for excavating and to clear the property of two tanks and a hydraulic car lift.

Per the petitioner, he “...had an unexpected fire...” and has now acquired “...a lot of structural issues with the building...” Staff was unable to determine if the cause of the current destruction was from fire, but in the photographs provided a notice from the City of Savannah’s Code Compliance determining that the property is “Condemned”, and “Unfit for Human Habitation” can be seen among the rubble. When Staff requested further clarification regarding this declaration, the petitioner sent a photograph of the notice. Staff determined that it is dated **December 1, 2020**.

On **April 16, 2021**, Staff met with the petitioner on-site. At that time the building was vacant and in a state of deterioration. However, Staff was not made aware of the specifics of the situation.

***Conditions.** In granting a Certificate of Appropriateness for relocation or demolition, the Historic Preservation Commission may impose, in addition to those listed below, reasonable conditions as will mitigate the negative effects of the relocation or demolition.*

***Demolition.** In the case of the demolition of a contributing principal building, a Certificate of Appropriateness must first be issued for the new construction of the replacement building prior to approval of the demolition.*

The petitioner must submit plans for the proposed New Construction that will replace the current, contributing building if demolished, *prior* to approval of the demolition.

Staff Recommendation – Petition of Thomas Cribbs
Address 1509 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
File No. 21-004448-COA
Date August 25, 2021
Page 4

Application Requirements. Except where a resource or portion of a resource poses an immediate threat to public safety, all applications for relocation or demolition of a contributing or non-contributing resource shall include the following information:

Contributing Resource.

A detailed explanation for the relocation or demolition and why it cannot be avoided;

Information documenting the construction date, history and development of the property;

A report from a Georgia-licensed structural engineer with demonstrated experience in historic renovation, restoration, or rehabilitation, as to the structural soundness of the contributing resource. The report shall also identify any dangerous structural conditions;

A fair market value appraisal of the property from a Georgia-licensed property appraiser. The appraisal shall include a full market sales report to include comparable sales;

The amount paid for the property; the remaining balance on any mortgage or other financing secured by the property; and, the annual debt service for the previous two (2) years;

If the property is income producing, the annual gross income from the property for the previous two (2) years; the itemized operating and maintenance expenses for the previous two (2) years; and depreciation deduction and annual cash flow before and after debt service for the previous two (2) years. The Historic Preservation Commission may require details of past rental history;

The selling price asked and offers received within the previous two (2) years; the most recent assessed values of the property and real estate taxes (if applicable); and, evidence of listing for sale;

Any economic incentives and/or funding available to the applicant through federal, state, local or private programs.

Non-Contributing Resource.

Information documenting the construction date, history and development of the property.

Staff determined that in its current state, the building retains minimal historic integrity worth preserving or retaining. Staff has also determined that the rear portion of the building poses an immediate threat to public safety. The notice from the City of Savannah’s Code Compliance dated **December 1, 2020**, deems the building “Unfit for Human Habitation.”

However, a report from a Georgia-licensed structural engineer with demonstrated experience in historic renovation, restoration, or rehabilitation, was not provided in the submittal packet. Therefore, there is no official report identifying the existing structural conditions and determining the structural soundness of the contributing resource.

Demolition Due to Immediate Threat. Any order for demolition by the City Manager of his or her designee in whole or in part, of any contributing resource within a local historic

Staff Recommendation – Petition of Thomas Cribbs
Address 1509 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
File No. 21-004448-COA
Date August 25, 2021
Page 5

district or local historic property due to a dangerous, hazardous or unsafe condition shall not be issued until the order has been reviewed and signed by a Georgia-licensed structural engineer, Planning Director and City Manager.

A court order for the demolition of the building by the City Manager was not submitted at this time.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the demolition of the building at 1509 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. as requested.

This approval is contingent upon the following condition:

- 1. The petitioner must submit and have plans approved by the HPC for the proposed New Construction that will replace the current, contributing building prior.**

MW: LGM: ora

Note: This recommendation could change subject to new information provided at the Historic Preservation Commission meeting. Final decisions will be made by the Historic Preservation Commission at the public hearing based on information provided at the meeting, as well as information submitted for the staff recommendation.