



CITY OF SAVANNAH

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

REQUEST FOR CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS

Petitioner: Jerome Elder

MPC File No.: 26-001620-COA

Address: 213 West 38th Street

PIN: 20065 26004

Zoning: TN-2

Staff Reviewer: Rohan Urs

Date: April 22, 2026

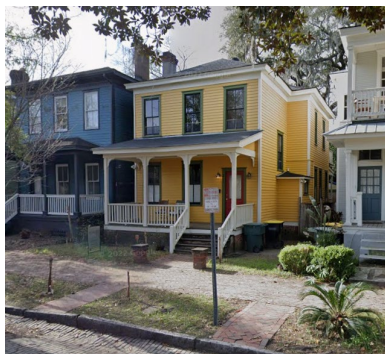
NATURE OF REQUEST:

213 West 38th Street is requesting approval for after-the-fact alterations to the front porch. The scope includes removal of a non-conforming second floor railing located on the sloped porch roof, removal of an infill double door along the front porch railing, installation of a revised wood porch railing with balusters, addition of operable louvered shutters at the side porch, and installation of a 3-foot-tall painted wood fence with gate.

CONTEXT/SURROUNDING AREA:

The residential building is a contributing resource within the Thomas Square-Streetcar National Register Historic District and the local Streetcar Historic District.

The subject property is located within the Streetcar Historic District and is identified as a contributing structure. The surrounding area consists primarily of residential buildings of similar scale and form, many of which feature front porches and low, visually permeable front yard fencing. The streetscape maintains a consistent rhythm of porch-oriented façades.



Streetview of the house as of March 2022 before the alterations

FINDINGS:

The following standards from the Sec 7.11 - Streetcar Historic District Ordinance apply:

Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Rehabilitation. Material changes to contributing resources and resources that are eligible for listing as contributing shall be evaluated by use of the current edition of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Rehabilitation as published by the U.S. Department of the Interior. In considering proposals for alterations to contributing resources, the documented original design of the resource may be considered.

Secretary of the Interior's Standards 2– Historic Character. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.

The removal of the non-functional second floor railing and infill porch door restores the original configuration, consistent with historic conditions. The proposed work re-establishes the intended architectural character of the front façade. Standard met.

Secretary of the Interior's Standards 3– Physical Record. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.

The existing second floor railing and porch infill door are non-historic additions that create a false sense of use. Their removal reinstates the building's authentic historic form. The proposed railing replacement introduces a compatible wood baluster system consisting of painted 2x4 top and bottom rails and 2x2 balusters, consistent with traditional porch detailing. Standard met.

Secretary of the Interior's Standards 5– Distinctive Features. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property shall be preserved.

The front porch, a character-defining feature of the structure, is preserved and enhanced through removal of incompatible elements and installation of a traditional wood railing system. Standard met.

Visual Compatibility Criteria. To maintain the special character of the Streetcar Historic District as identified in the architectural survey and visual analysis, new construction and any material change in appearance shall be consistent with the standards, criteria and guidelines developed for the district. The applicable criteria below shall be used to assess new construction and material changes. These criteria shall not be the basis for appeal to any board, commission or administrator described in this Ordinance, or to the Mayor and Aldermen.

Scale. The overall scale and the scale of individual components of the proposed building or structure shall be visually compatible to the contributing buildings and structures to which it is visually related.

The proposed fence and porch elements are appropriately scaled to the structure and surrounding context. Standard met.

Openings. *The rhythm and solid-to-void ratio of the proposed building or structure shall be visually compatible with contributing buildings and structures to which it is visually related.*

Removal of the infill door restores the original porch opening and improves the relationship between the porch and the primary façade. Standard met.

Materials. *The relationship of materials and textures of the proposed building or structure shall be visually compatible with the contributing buildings and structures to which it is visually related.*

The use of painted wood for the railing and fence is consistent with traditional materials within the district. The operable louvered shutters are appropriately scaled and remain secondary in visual prominence. Standard met.

Streetcar Historic District Design Standards.

New Construction, Additions, and Alterations. The intent of these standards is to ensure appropriate new construction, additions, and alterations within the Streetcar Historic District. They are not intended to promote copies of the architectural designs of the past, but to encourage contemporary designs that protect and complement existing contributing resources. They are further intended to protect the historic integrity of the contributing resource.

The following design standards shall apply to new construction, additions, alterations to contributing and non-contributing resources, and site alterations, unless otherwise specified. Though certain building materials are prescribed below, the Historic Preservation Commission may approve alternative materials that are not listed as prohibited upon a showing by the applicant that the material or product is visually compatible with historic building materials and has performed satisfactorily in the local climate.

Porches, Stoops, Balconies and Decks, Alterations to contributing resources.

Porches shall be repaired rather than replaced, provided however, if the degree of degradation does not allow repair, the degradation shall be photographically documented and verified by the Planning Director, and the new porch materials and configuration shall be of the same material and configuration as the original.

If the original porch material and/or configuration is unknown, the new porch material and configuration shall be based on historic context.

Front porches shall not be enclosed. Side and rear porches may be enclosed with fine wire mesh, glass or shutters, provided the porch continues to read as a porch and character-defining features (including but not limited to columns, balustrades, entablature and similar features) are retained and not obscured or damaged.

The proposed work restores the porch to its historically open condition while letting the sides remain shuttered. The porch is still read to be open, and the proposal also reintroduces a compatible railing design consistent with traditional residential porch detailing. Standard met.

Fencing and Walls. *The intent of these standards is to ensure that walls and fences define outdoor spaces appropriately, separate private and public realms and add architectural interest to a building's façade. In addition to compliance with the requirements set forth in Sec. 9.6, Fences and Walls, fences and walls shall also comply with the following standards:*

Fencing and Walls, Permitted Materials. Wood, iron, brick, true stucco over concrete block, smooth fiber cement, and extruded aluminum.

Chain link may be permitted in the rear yard but not along any street. Plastic or metal slats use in chain link shall not be permitted.

Fencing and Walls, Prohibited Materials. Vinyl, PVC, and corrugated metal.

Fencing and Walls, Configuration.

Fences or walls no more than 36 inches in height may be installed within the front yard.

Fences or walls no more than eight (8) feet in height may be installed within the side or rear yards behind the front façade of the building.

A minimum of five (5) feet must be provided between a fence and a building where they are parallel.

The proposed 3-foot-tall painted wood fence with spindle design maintains visual permeability and is consistent with established front yard fencing patterns in the district. Standard met.

The proposed wood railing, shutters, and fence are consistent with traditional materials and detailing found within the Streetcar Historic District. Standard met.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the removal of inappropriate work and the selective alterations proposed to appropriately restore the porch elements, as requested, because the proposal is visually compatible and consistent with the applicable standards.

MW: CC: RU

Note: This recommendation could change subject to new information provided at the Historic Preservation Commission meetings. 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.