



CITY OF SAVANNAH

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

REQUEST FOR CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS

Petitioner: Jennifer Paulk

MPC File No.: 26-003515-COA

Address: 217 East 33rd Street

PIN: 20053 39015

Zoning: TN-2

Staff Reviewer: Alexander Merced

Date: August 26, 2026

NATURE OF REQUEST:

The applicant would like to install handrails on the front porch stairs of the home. The porch has a set of stairs on each side, so each side will have one handrail.

Historic Savannah Foundation (HSF) holds a protective covenant on this property, and they have reviewed and approved this proposal. It should also be noted that installing handrails is a prerequisite for getting homeowners insurance, which requires handrails on stairways with more than three risers.

CONTEXT/SURROUNDING AREA:

The building was constructed in 1897 and is a contributing resource within the Thomas Square-Streetcar National Register Historic District and the local Streetcar Historic District. It sits midblock on the south side of the street and sits on a block with a mix of contributors and non-contributors.

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.*

No material will be removed, and the historic character of the property will not be affected. The standard is 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.*

This will not be a conjectural feature as railings are common throughout the historic district and on similar homes. The standard is met.

Secretary of the Interior's Standards 9– New Additions to not Damage. *New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.*

No historic material or characteristics will be damaged. The standard is met.

Secretary of the Interior's Standards 10– New Additions Reversible. *New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.*

The railings can always be removed in the future if necessary. The standard is 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.*

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 railings will be made of wood. The standard is 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.

Prohibited materials, Porches, Stoops, Balconies and Decks, Alterations to contributing resources. Fiberglass (including Perma-Cast), vinyl and PVC.

The railing will be 36 inches tall and made of wood. 4x4 balusters will be used at a spacing that matches the existing front porch balustrade. The above standards are met.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the installation of two handrails on either side of the front porch of 217 East 33rd Street as requested because they are visually compatible and meet the standards.

MW: CC: APM

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.