



CITY OF SAVANNAH

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

REQUEST FOR CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS

Petitioner: Samuel Kopelman

MPC File No.: 25-004739-COA

Address: 2324 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.

PIN: 20073 14007

Zoning: TC-2

Staff Reviewer: Caitlin Chamberlain

Date: January 28, 2026

NATURE OF REQUEST:

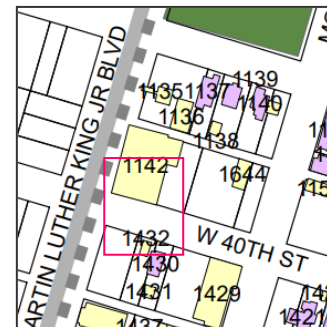
The applicant is requesting approval for the demolition of the non-contributing structure located at 2324 Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard.

CONTEXT/SURROUNDING AREA:

2324 Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard was constructed in 1975 and is a non-contributing resource within the Thomas Square-Streetcar National Register Historic District and the local Streetcar Historic District.

With the initial submittal packet presented in October, Ethos Preservation provided a detailed history including Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps. The submittal packet notes that the building is located on the site that was formerly 2314 and 2322 West Broad Street. Their research noted that two structures were built on the corners of the block and constructed sometime between 1898-1916, where the parcels between the buildings remained vacant. The building constructed in 1975 enveloped the two buildings and infilled the space between them. At this time, the only original materials that can be observed on the exterior are the roof and chimneys. The interiors of the buildings were sealed off and incorporated into the large warehouse building that is there today.

At present, the building is a vacant warehouse that takes up the parcels between West 40th Street and West 39th Lane. Behind it is an empty lot. This is split into separate parcels where new construction is proposed. There are mostly non-contributing buildings in the immediate vicinity.



PROJECT HISTORY:

This project was first presented at the October 22, 2025, Historic Preservation Commission. There was concern that the two enveloped buildings were still intact and could potentially be restored, which may lead to listing them as separate contributing resources. The HPC decision was as follows:

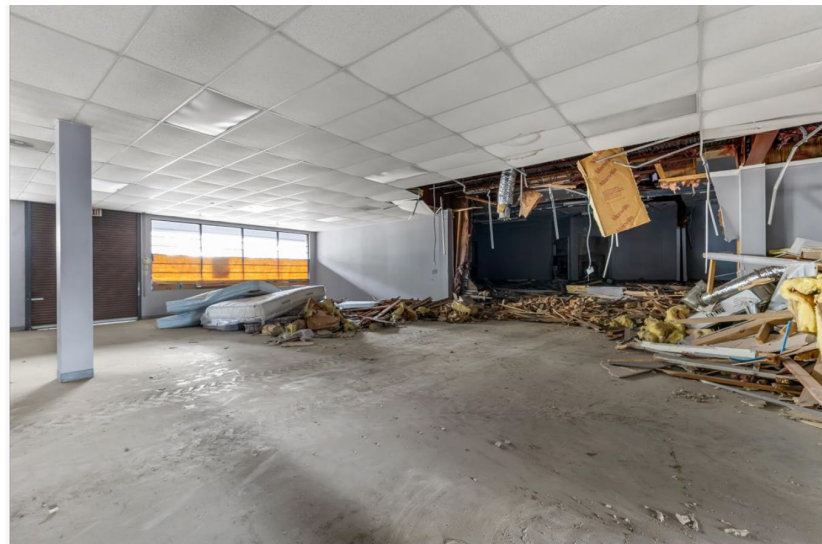
“The Savannah Historic Preservation Commission does hereby continue the non-contributing demolition request for 2324 Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, to the December 17, 2025, Historic Preservation Commission meeting to allow time for further investigation of the historic structures within the existing building.”

In the time since this meeting, the applicant facilitated an initial exploratory demolition to see how much of the enclosed buildings were still intact behind the drywall. When this work had been started, the applicant reached out to MPC staff, noting that the exploratory demolition led to a partial collapse of the buildings. It was believed to be due to a lack of interior structural support. Updated photos were sent but on further discussion, the applicant invited staff to visit the site.

On January 5, 2026, staff met the applicant onsite to observe the current conditions, and photos that were taken that day are included as a separate attachment on the agenda.

The building materials remain onsite, and staff recommends salvaging materials for reuse rather than disposing of in a landfill.

The images below illustrate a before and after of what took place in part of the building to understand what had been enclosed behind the drywall.



FINDINGS:

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 of more of the following criteria:

The current building was constructed in 1975 whereas the Period of Significance for the Streetcar Historic District ends in 1935. The building does not meet all of the above criteria and the integrity of the former historic buildings was compromised when they were enclosed within the furniture warehouse. The interior of houses was not preserved, as the interior of the building is one large open store space that had largely enclosed the buildings behind drywall. The applicant notes that it was not apparent until drywall was removed what the conditions were like. Upon visiting, staff noted that there are materials that can be salvaged.

For the warehouse portion, the existing exterior materials include concrete block and vertical siding as well as modern storefront windows and doors. These are not exceptionally important but some of the material could still be salvaged, as well as the brick from the chimneys and roof materials.

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

These were not found to be the case.

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

The historic houses that were enclosed within the warehouse were wood frame buildings with horizontal wood siding and possibly a brick foundation based on the rubble currently in the

warehouse. They were likely of a vernacular style seen throughout the Streetcar Historic District. They do not seem to have embodied the work of a master, though that's not to say they were not important, but as mentioned, their integrity diminished when they were first enclosed and then literally started to decline further upon opening up the walls.

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

This is not likely. There is already established evidence (archival and what can be seen) that there were two houses that instead of being demolished, were incorporated into the warehouse building. There were not fully intact houses within the building still. This parcel has experienced ground disturbance with its construction and is not likely to yield artifacts or archaeological resources.

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 of more of the above criteria.

The above criteria that would qualify the building as exceptionally important are not met.

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.

Staff finds that the building does not qualify for contributing status and should remain non-contributing. The interior where what's left of the enclosed buildings are not fully intact and likely had not been when they were enclosed. Contributing status criteria has not been met.

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.*

Staff recommends the following conditions:

1. Explore whether deconstruction of what is left of the buildings can be safely achieved, and salvage building materials for reuse where possible
2. Document existing conditions of the building as per the City of Savannah's Policy for Documenting Buildings Prior to Demolition.

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:*

Non-Contributing Resource.

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

This information was provided.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the request for the demolition of the non-contributing building located at 2324 Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard with the following conditions because the non-contributing demolition criteria are otherwise met:

- 1. Explore whether deconstruction of what is left of the buildings can be safely achieved, and salvage materials for reuse where possible.**
- 2. Document existing conditions of the building as per the City of Savannah's Policy for Documenting Buildings Prior to Demolition.**

MW: CC

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.