



CITY OF SAVANNAH

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

REQUEST FOR CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS

Petitioner: Eco Construction and Consulting, LLC

MPC File No.: 25-006154-COA

Address: 306 East 39th Street

PIN: 20065 34007

Zoning: TN-2

Staff Reviewer: Caitlin Chamberlain

Date: January 28, 2026

NATURE OF REQUEST:

The applicant is requesting approval of a rehabilitation and alterations project for the property located at 306 East 39th Street. The request also includes an after-the-fact fence installation done by a previous owner. The scope of work includes:

- Replacing rotted, dilapidated siding with in-kind wood replacement siding
- Changing the design of the front porch to match the original design
- Repairing decks on the side and rear of the building
- Infilling missing windows previously taken out during renovations throughout the years

CONTEXT/SURROUNDING AREA:

306 East 39th Street was built in 1910 and is a contributing resource within the Thomas Square-Streetcar National Register Historic District and the local Streetcar Historic District.

This property has sat vacant for several years and has recently changed ownership. The house sits mid-block on a stretch of East 39th Street between Habersham and Lincoln Streets. It is surrounded by other contributing historic houses on a residential block.

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.*

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.*

Secretary of the Interior's Standards 4– Historic Changes. *Most properties change over time; those changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.*

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.*

Secretary of the Interior's Standards 6– Deteriorated Features. *Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.*

This house has been the recipient of inappropriate alterations over the years. This rehab project seeks to restore it to a more appropriate appearance, based on historic photos provided by the applicant. The project meets the above standards. There were some changes to this building that have not gained historic significance such as the odd circle feature on the front of the building which appears to enclose part of the porch. The portico and upper balcony will be restored on the front elevation and the correct horizontal wood siding will be installed.

The following standards from the Sec 7.8 - Savannah Downtown Historic District Ordinance apply:

Visual Compatibility Criteria. *To maintain the special character of the Savannah Downtown 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.*

Proportion of front façade. *The relationship of the width of a building or structure to the height of its front facade shall be visually compatible to the contributing buildings and structures to which it is visually related.*

The front façade will be restored to its historic appearance which is more balanced and appropriate. A return to form is visually compatible along the block.

Proportion of openings. *The relationship of the width of the windows to height of windows within a building or structure shall be visually compatible to the contributing buildings and structures to which the structure is visually related.*

The return of windows to the building will remain balanced. New openings are not proposed. Staff does have a request for more information about the opening that will be exposed when the

enclosed portion of the porch is removed, and whether the design represented on the drawing indicates what is there underneath, or what is proposed. While the opening is proportional, it may be more appropriate to install the same configuration as is seen on the set of entrance doors to the right.

Projections. Entrances, porches, and other projections of the proposed building or structure shall be visually compatible with contributing buildings and structures to which it is visually related.

As stated above, the return to form based on the historic photographs is appropriate. This is visually compatible for the house itself as well as other contributing resources on the block.

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.

All proposed materials are visually compatible and appropriate for a historic building to include wood doors, windows, railings and stairs.

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.

Exterior walls, Alterations to contributing resources. The intent of these standards is to ensure that exterior building walls reflect and complement the traditional materials and construction techniques of the district's architecture.

Exterior walls 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 replacement wall shall be of the same materials and configuration as the original wall.

The original horizontal siding was removed at some point after 2022, per Google Street View. The proposed replacement siding meets the standard, and based on photos, is the appropriate type for this house. It is not noted that the siding will be painted so staff recommends ensuring that it will be painted.

Windows, Alterations to contributing resources.

Windows shall be repaired rather than replaced, provided however, if the degree of degradation does not allow repair, the degradation of each window shall be photographically documented and verified by the Planning Director, and the new

window shall be of the same materials and configuration as the original (including single-glazed and true-divided lights, when appropriate).

If the original window material and/or configuration is unknown, or if a new window is proposed in an unoriginal opening, the new window material and configuration shall be based on historic context.

Most of the windows are missing, which happened sometime after June 2022, based on Google Street View. The proposed replacements are in-kind Victorbilt Historic Series to match what was there. Fortunately, there are photographs to confirm the type. The one window in question is the left side of the front elevation where the enclosed portion will be removed to determine what is currently there, and what is proposed. Staff recommends that the same type of door configuration is installed.

Doors/Entrances, Alterations to contributing resources.

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

If the original door material and/or configuration is unknown, or if a new door is proposed in an unoriginal opening, the new door material and configuration shall be based on historic context.

The proposed in-kind replacement doors are wood and match what had been there previously. The only difference is that when the upper balcony is reinstalled above the front portico that one of the longer window openings has a set of double doors for balcony access. Since the opening is not changing and the door configuration matches the window next to it, the standard is met.

There is also what appears to likely not be an original set of French doors on the second floor of the rear elevation. The proposed project includes returning a window to the opening which staff finds is appropriate especially because there is not currently a balcony on this part of the building, nor is one being proposed.

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.

There is a set of side porches on the side elevation, which can be seen from the front, but is set back towards the rear half of the building. At present, there is only an upper balcony, but the rehabilitation project proposes to reestablish the lower-level porch beneath it. Although there is currently a fence that does not meet the ordinance, making the lower-level invisible from street view, a lower fence may also still conceal this. However, if the lower fence does make it visible, this does meet the standard. A rear egress stair will be constructed for access to a door on the second story rear wall. The stair will not impact the historic structure negatively and in theory could be removed without causing damage to the building.

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 front porch has a partial enclosure which will be removed to ensure that the standard is 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.*

The existing fence is wood built over an existing masonry base, which meets the standard.

Fencing and Walls, Configuration.

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

The existing fence exceeds this. It is an odd configuration with varying heights, but at the highest point it is 8 feet. This is allowable for the side and rear yards but must be adjusted for the front yard. The fence was changed sometime between January 2022 and November 2025, without a COA. Prior to that the fence also did not meet the standard but had been installed before 2019 when the Streetcar Historic District Ordinance was established. The removal of this would have triggered the need for a COA which was not pursued. The varying heights of the front fence and gates are also not visually compatible and historically insensitive. Staff recommends that the applicant explores options to lower the fence and gates to be even, and to meet the standard. It may be possible to look into a Special Exception for something that slightly exceeds the 36" maximum, but maintaining what is there would likely not be granted an exception because there is no outstanding hardship that would require keeping this as is.

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.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the rehabilitation and alterations project for 306 East 39th Street with the following conditions to be reviewed and approved by staff prior to starting the work, because it is otherwise visually compatible and meets the standards:

- 1. Provide clarification about the front elevation opening that will be exposed after the enclosure is removed and consider adding a door configuration that matches the historic photos.**
- 2. Ensure that the siding is painted.**
- 3. Remove the non-compliant fence or shorten it to meet the standard and ensure that the fence and gates are an even height across the front.**

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.