



CITY OF SAVANNAH

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

REQUEST FOR CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS

Petitioner: Ward Architecture, Josh Ward

MPC File No.: 26-003240-COA

Address: 641-645 West 39th Street

PIN: 20073 16001

Zoning: TR-1

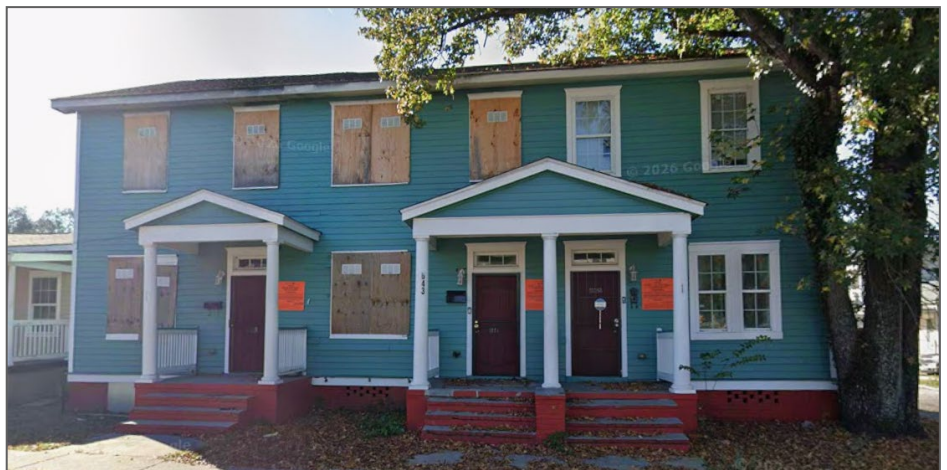
Staff Reviewer: Caitlin Chamberlain

Date: July 22, 2026

NATURE OF REQUEST:

The applicant is requesting approval to rehabilitate the historic triplex located at 641-645 West 39th Street. The scope of work includes:

- Brick foundation repointing where necessary
- CMU porch foundation will receive finish coat of true stucco
- Removal of non-historic windows and doors to be replaced with more appropriate types
- Replacing missing brackets and gable vents based on older photos
- Replacing existing asphalt shingle roof with a new asphalt shingle roof
- Remove non-historic railing from front stoops and replace with new wood railing having historic detailing. Two rear non-historic stoops will be removed and replaced with wood stoops/stairs and railings matching the front.
- Installation of a 6' wood fence around the rear yard



CONTEXT/SURROUNDING AREA:

641-645 West 39th Street was built in 1916 and is a contributing resource within the Cuyler-Brownville Historic District. It consists of three addresses: 641, 643, and 645. The building is currently vacant and in need of maintenance/repair work. It sits on a corner lot that also runs along Florance Street. The rear elevation shows evidence of fire damage.

FINDINGS:

The following standards from the Sec 7.10 - Cuyler-Brownville 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 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.*

There are no conjectural features being proposed. Older photos show the three side brackets that had been on both side elevations. There is a combination of missing and non-historic windows in the house which are proposed for the removal. The applicant proposes, due to the Craftsman elements of the building, to select a 4/1 lite pattern. This is typical for houses of this time, including others seen on this block, making the proposed change contextual rather than conjectural. The image to the right is from across the street, showing a 4/1 pattern on the windows.



***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.*

Distinctive features will be preserved where possible, or replaced in kind when that is not possible.

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.*

There is what appears to be the original siding on the house and the intention is to repair siding and replace in kind with matching wood siding where necessary.

Visual Compatibility Criteria. *To maintain the special character of the Victorian 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.*

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.*

Windows and doors are missing but will be replaced to match the existing openings. The openings will not be changing.

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 proposed materials are visually compatible and include the following:

- Foundation: Mortar to match the brick foundation and smooth coat stucco
- Siding and Trim: Painted wood
- Doors: Wood 4-panel doors on the front and 4-lite wood doors on the rear
- Windows: Custom built single pane TDL wood double hung windows, with the majority to have 4/1 pattern and double windows will have 3/1 pattern, and windows on rear addition will have 2/2 to indicate that the openings are not original to the house
- Brackets and Gable Vents: Replacing brackets seen in older photos with wood to match as well as louvered gable vents
- Roof: Architectural asphalt shingles
- Stoops: Wood railings, metal handrails, wood stoops and wood railings on the rear
- Fence: Wood fence

Cuyler-Brownville 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 Cuyler-Brownville 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 buildings and structures, 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.

Foundation, Alterations to contributing resources. *The intent of these standards is to ensure that foundations match the traditional pattern of construction in height and materials and complement the craftsmanship of contributing buildings.*

Foundations 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 foundation shall be of the same materials and configuration as the original foundation.

The brick foundation of the main house will not be changed. There is only mortar repointing proposed where necessary for the main house and the CMU foundation of the front two stoops will be given a finish coat of true stucco. Staff requests information about the mortar and stucco mixes.

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.

As seen in the photos, there are areas where the siding and trim has disappeared and others where it has partly detached. In areas where it is missing, the replacement siding will match what is there in profile and material (painted wood).

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.

Many of the windows on the house are missing and boarded up. They are not stored onsite. In a May 2012 Google Street View image, the replacement windows can be seen in most openings. This work may have been done around this time because there are what look like manufacturer's stickers seen on some of the windows. The quality of the 2007 image is too blurry to tell what the window status was, but none were boarded up.



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 original doors are not on the building, but there are doors in place except for one of the three rear doors. The proposal is to replace the front doors with 4-panel wood doors and the rear will have 4-lite wood doors, which are both appropriate as seen on the door schedule.

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.

At some point, non-historic wood railings were placed on the front stoops. These will be replaced with historically appropriate wood picket balusters and 3' railings along with metal handrails for the concrete steps where there are currently no handrails at all.

For the rear stoops, there are currently non-historic wood stairs, railings and landings which are proposed to be removed and replaced with stoops of a similar configuration to the front but will not be covered.

Roof, Contributing Resources.

Roof, Materials, Contributing Resources.

Original roof material 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 roof shall be of the same material and configuration as the original (except wood or asbestos).

The existing asphalt shingles are not historic, and the proposed replacement is an architectural asphalt similar to what is there currently. In 2007, there were two dormers on the front as well as chimneys. By 2012 these had been removed. Since there was not an overlay district for Cuyler-Brownville until 2019, there was no review or COA required for this work to be done.

Roof, Configuration, Contributing Resources.

Original roof configuration shall be maintained.

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 or extruded aluminum.

Chain link may be permitted in the rear yard but not along any street.

Plastic or metal slats used in chain link shall not be permitted.

A wood fence is proposed for the rear yard.

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 fence is only proposed for the rear yard and will be 6 feet in height. The fence does not run parallel to any buildings. The standards are met.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the proposed work at 641-645 West 39th Street with the following condition to be reviewed by staff prior to starting the work, because it is otherwise visually compatible and meets the standards:

- 1. Provide information about the mortar and stucco mixes.**

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.