

**CITY OF SAVANNAH
SAVANNAH DOWNTOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT BOARD OF REVIEW
REQUEST FOR CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS**

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

PETITIONER: BARNARD ARCHITECTS, Robert Portman
220 East Hall
Savannah, Ga 31401

FILE NO.: 20-004480-COA

ADDRESS: 127 WEST CONGRESS STREET

PIN: 2-0004-360-11

ZONING: D-CBD

STAFF REVIEWER: Olivia Arfuso

DATE: October 14, 2020

NATURE OF REQUEST:

The applicant is requesting approval for the alteration of storefront windows, and new rear exterior doors at 127 West Congress Street.

On the Congress Street elevation, the applicant is proposing to alter the storefront windows. The proposed plan is to remove two storefront sashes and panels of glazing. Two horizontal wood mullions will be installed, matching the existing vertical mullion in detail and size, as well as four new sections of clear tempered glass. The mullions will be painted in-kind, to match the existing paint color on the front façade (a complex dark green, almost black, with blue undertone).

The existing historic front doors are proposed to remain open during business hours, and new interior, non-lockable passage entrance doors are proposed to be installed into a new interior wall set. The new interior wall is proposed to be located 4-feet, 10-inches from the face of the interior glass sash. The doors are proposed to be custom made wood, double doors measuring 7-feet-wide and 8-feet-tall with ¾ clear, tempered glass lites and carved panels below. The wood will be a species of African Heartwood with a natural finish and quartersawn grain pattern. The trim, and base, will be painted to match the existing, exterior storefront color. The door will have a pull bar that is finished in oil rubbed bronze and have a gypsum board surround which will be painted, “Sticks & Stones” by Sherwin Williams (SW7503).

On the Congress Lane elevation, the applicant is proposing to install a new rear exterior door. The existing, historic shutters will be left in the “open” position to expose the original transom, sash, and wood panel surround. A non-historic panel is proposed to be removed, and a hollow metal door, metal frame, metal side panel and metal transom panel with exhaust vents (for an interior bathroom) will be installed. All metal elements will be painted to match the existing

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color of the remaining historic shutters. The new installation is proposed to fit within the historic rear door opening, so the opening size will not change.

FINDINGS:

The historic building was constructed in 1873 and is a contributing structure within the Savannah National Historic Landmark District and the Savannah Local Historic District.

The building is visible on, both, the 1884 and 1888 Sanborn Maps. The 1898 Sanborn Map depicts 127 West Congress Street as a three-story, brick building with a brick or metal cornice. It is described as having an iron storefront. There are three floors of windows on the rear façade, each with iron / clad shutters. A three-story light-well runs through the center of the building. There are very few changes to the building on the 1916 Sanborn Map and the rear window openings on the first, second, and third floors are still visible with their iron / clad shutters intact. By the 1954 Sanborn Map the internal wall, separating 125 West Congress Street and 127 West Congress Street, has been removed. The two buildings are depicted as functioning as one entity on the 1979 Sanborn Map. The rear windows with their iron or clad shutters remain intact and are proposed to be retained and preserved.

During Staff's initial review of this application, Staff requested clarification on *what* historic material was left of the rear exterior door, behind the original historic clad / iron shutters. The petitioner discovered the historic wood transom, and surround was still intact. These elements have, now, been incorporated into the scope of the project, and will be retained and preserved.

The following standards from the Sec 7.8 - Savannah Downtown 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 historic character of the property is to be retained. Historic materials, features and spaces that characterize the property will be preserved. The standard is 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.*

Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques that characterize the property are to be preserved. The standard is met.

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Secretary of the Interior's Standards 7– Chemical or Physical Treatments. *Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.*

Ensure that any necessary chemical, or physical, treatments performed on the exterior of the building be undertaken using the gentlest means possible, to avoid damage to any historic materials.

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.*

The proposed storefront window alteration and front / rear door installations will not destroy any historic materials that characterize the property. The new work will be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features of the historic building and its environment.

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 proposed work will 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.

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 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 applicant is proposing to alter the storefront windows. The proposed plan is to remove the two, storefront sashes and glazing. Two, horizontal wood mullions will be installed, as well as four new sections of clear tempered glass. The mullions will be painted in-kind, to match the existing paint color on the front façade (a complex dark green, almost black, with blue undertone).

The horizontal wood mullion feature is visible in a 1979 image of 127 West Congress Street from the Georgia Historical Society. This feature still exists on the neighboring building; 125 West Congress Street. The proposed horizontal mullion will be in line with the adjacent Barrel House (125 West Congress Street) pre-existing horizontal wood mullion. Since there is photographic evidence of this feature existing on the building, Staff finds this alteration to be

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appropriate and compatible with the contributing structure to which the building is visually related.

Relationship of materials, texture and color. *The relationship of materials, texture and color of the facade of a building or structure shall be visually compatible with the predominate materials, textures, and colors used on contributing buildings and structures to which the structure is visually related.*

The applicant is proposing to alter two, storefront windows. The proposed plan is to remove the two, storefront sashes and glazing. Two, horizontal wood mullions will be installed, as well as four new sections of clear tempered glass. The mullions will be painted in-kind, to match the existing paint color on the front façade (a complex dark green, almost black, with blue undertone).

The proposed installation of inset, entrance doors are to be custom made wood, double doors measuring 7-feet-wide and 8-feet-tall with $\frac{3}{4}$ clear, tempered glass lites and carved panels below. The wood will be a species of African Heartwood with a natural finish and quartersawn grain pattern. The trim, and base, will be painted to match the existing exterior storefront color. The door will have a pull bar that is finished in oil rubbed bronze and have a gypsum board surround which will be painted, "Sticks & Stones" by Sherwin Williams (SW7503). The interior entrance doors will be visible only during hours of operation, when the existing, exterior historic doors are opened. The new doors are proposed to be compatible with the massing, size, scale and architecture of the historic property and its environment.

On the Congress Lane elevation, the rear door shutters will be left in the open position to expose the original transom, sash, and wood panel surround. A non-historic panel is proposed to be removed to allow for the installation of a hollow metal door, metal frame, metal side panel and metal transom panel with exhaust vents. All metal elements will be painted to match the existing rust on the remaining historic shutters. The new installation is proposed to fit within the historic rear door opening, so the opening size will not change. The proposed materials and colors will be visually compatible with the historic building and the contributing structures to which it is visually related.

Savannah Downtown Historic District Design Standards. *The intent of these standards is to ensure appropriate new construction, additions, and alterations within the Savannah Downtown 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 resources.*

The following design standards shall apply to new construction, additions, alterations to contributing and non-contributing buildings and structures, unless otherwise specified. Though certain building materials are prescribed herein, the Board 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.

For the purposes of evaluating the visual compatibility and design standards of exterior fenestration, where voids (windows, doors, and storefronts) in the exterior façade are substantially blocked by interior walls or built-in furniture, these may be considered part of the exterior wall if they are built within three feet of the exterior wall. For example, if an interior wall is built abutting the storefront, that interior wall is impacting the exterior design of the fenestration and may be subject to review by the Historic Board of Review.

Entrances and Doors.

Alterations to contributing resources.

Doors shall be repaired with in-kind materials 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 materials 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.

Staff could not find evidence of there ever being a second set of interior, entrance doors on the Sanborn Maps. The proposed doors are to be installed internally, creating a small vestibule with the existing, external historic doors (that are to remain). The proposed doors are to be custom made wood, double doors measuring 7-feet-wide and 8-feet-tall with $\frac{3}{4}$ clear, tempered glass lites and carved panels below. The wood will be a species of African Heartwood with a natural finish and quartersawn grain pattern. The trim, and base, will be painted to match the existing exterior storefront color. The door will have a pull bar that is finished in oil rubbed bronze and have a gypsum board surround which will be painted, "Sticks & Stones" by Sherwin Williams (SW7503). The interior entrance doors will be visible only during hours of operation, when the existing, exterior historic doors are opened.

New construction, alterations to non-contributing resources and additions.

Configuration. *Door frames shall be inset not less than three (3) inches from the exterior surface of the façade of a building, excluding façades with wood siding.*

Materials.

Permitted: Doors shall be made of glass, wood, clad wood or steel (without wood grain simulation).

Prohibited: Vinyl; sliding glass doors visible from a street; steel-pressed doors simulating wood grain, half-moon, semi-circular, diamond or similar light insets; boarded-up doors or entrances.

On the Congress Lane elevation, the rear door shutters will be left in the open position to expose the original transom, sash, and wood panel surround. The original door, itself, no longer exists. A non-historic panel is proposed to be removed to allow for the installation of a hollow metal door measuring 3-feet by 7-feet. A metal frame, metal side panel and metal transom panel with exhaust vents will, also, be installed. All metal elements will be painted to match the existing rust on the remaining historic shutters. The new installation is proposed to fit within the historic

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rear door opening, so the opening size will not change. Ensure that the proposed rear door frame is inset no less than (3) inches from the exterior surface of the façade of the building.

Commercial Storefronts.

Alterations to contributing resources.

Original storefronts 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 storefront shall be of the same materials and configuration as the original.

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

The applicant is proposing to alter the storefront windows. The proposed plan is to remove the two storefront sashes and glazing. Two, horizontal wood mullions will be installed, as well as four new sections of clear tempered glass. The mullions will be painted in-kind, to match the existing paint color on the front façade (a complex dark green, almost black, with blue undertone).

The horizontal wood mullions that will be installed perpendicular to the existing vertical mullions are visible in a 1979 image of 127 West Congress Street, and still existing on the neighboring building 125 West Congress Street. Since there is photographic evidence of this feature existing on the building, Staff finds this alteration to be appropriate and compatible with the contributing structure to which the building is visually related.

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STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Approval for the alteration of storefront windows, and new rear exterior doors at 127 West Congress Street with the following conditions to be submitted to staff for final review and approval otherwise, the work is visually compatible and meets the standards:

- 1. Ensure that any necessary chemical, or physical, treatments performed on the exterior of the building be undertaken using the gentlest means possible, to avoid damage to any historic materials.**
- 2. Ensure that the proposed rear door frame is inset no less than (3) inches from the exterior surface of the façade of the building.**
- 3. Ensure the window glass has no dark tints or reflective effects.**

LGM: ora

Note: This recommendation could change subject to new information provided at the Historic District Board of Review meetings. Final decisions will be made by the Historic District Board of Review at the public hearing based on information provided at the meeting, as well as information submitted for the staff recommendation.