



S A V A N N A H   H I S T O R I C   D I S T R I C T  
B O A R D   O F   R E V I E W

**REQUEST FOR CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS**

**Petitioner:** Sottile & Sottile  
**MPC File No.:** 22-005355-COA  
**Address:** 336 Barnard Street  
**PIN:** 20015 45047  
**Zoning:** D-R  
**Staff Reviewer:** Leah G. Michalak  
**Date:** December 14, 2022

**NATURE OF REQUEST:**

The applicant is requesting approval for a Special Exception for the property located at 336 Barnard Street. The Special Exception is from the design standard that reads:

*Sec.7.8.10.g.ii.1.b. Tithing Blocks: A building on a tithing block shall locate its primary entrance to front the east-west street.*

To allow for the new building on the site to construct its entrance facing the north-south (Barnard) street.

Per the applicant, the Special Exception is for the following reasons:

- *The legal parcel address is 336 Barnard Street.*
- *The parcel has its primary frontage on Barnard Street, and its secondary frontage on West Charlton Lane, thus Barnard Street is the appropriate location for its primary address.*
- *There are multiple historic contributing buildings in the immediate context with primary entrances on Barnard Street.*
- *When a legal lot of record does not have frontage on an east-west street, a special exception is the appropriate mechanism to provide legal access from the primary street on which the lot has frontage.*

**PROJECT HISTORY:**

(File No. 20-005548) Part I, Height and Mass for this project approved by the HDBR on December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2020, with the condition that the proposed baluster height be approved. In addition to the new construction, demolition of the existing non-contributing structure was also approved.

On August 10, 2022, Part II, Design Details was heard by the Board. However, during the meeting it was brought to the board and staff's attention that because of the structure's height (4 stories) and because it's located in a D-R zoning district, it should have been reviewed under the Large Scale Development standards during the Part I, Height and Mass review. Due to this error the project was continued by the board. The HDBR decided as follows:

*"The Savannah Downtown Historic District Board of Review does hereby continue the petition for New Construction, Part II (Design Details) at 336 Barnard Street to the September 14<sup>th</sup> Historic District Board of Review meeting with the following conditions because otherwise the work is visually compatible and meets the standards:*

- 1. Provide a full-size sample of the proposed window or choose one which has been previously approved by the board / listed on the MPC's window brochure.*
- 2. Utilize a white-light source for all exterior lighting fixtures*
- 3. Provide the height for the front-yard iron fence.*
- 4. Provide a dimensioned detail drawing for the porch and balcony railings, ensure they meet the standards for porch and balcony railings, and ensure that the balconies are not more than 3 feet deep.*
- 5. Provide dimensions for the standing seam metal roof detailing seam height and panel width*
- 6. Apply for Special exceptions to be heard with Part II (Design Details)."*

At the applicant's request (Sottile & Sottile), on August 17, 2022, the City's Zoning Administrator issues a determination regarding this project. It stated:

*"It is the determination of the zoning administrator that any proposed construction on a tything block may located the primary entrance on a north-south street when location on an easy-west street is not possible provided it is consistent with contributing buildings within the context."*

However, Andrew Jones (as agent for 120 West Jones LLC) appealed the determination of the Zoning Administrator to the Zoning Board of Appeals and on October 27, 2022, the Zoning Board of Appeals remanded *"the petition for a Certificate of Appropriateness for 336 Barnard Street back to the Historic District Board of Review, to reconsider the decision regarding the position of the entryway, ..."*

The applicant has now applied for a Special Exception from the standard, as described above, to keep the entryway in its proposed (and previously approved) location, facing the north-south (Barnard) street.

## **FINDINGS:**

**The following standards from the Sec 3.12 Special Exceptions apply:**

### ***Special Exceptions.***

***Review by Savannah Downtown Historic District Board of Review. Special Exceptions (as listed below) for the Savannah Downtown Historic Overlay District shall be considered by the Savannah Downtown Historic Board of Review.***

### ***Applicable Special Exceptions.***

*To adjust Preservation and Design Standards for local historic districts as follows:*

*Secs. 7.8.10 Design Standards.*

The request is for a valid design standard.

***Review Criteria for Special Exceptions.*** *When reviewing a special exception request, a finding shall be made by the Savannah Downtown Historic District Board of Review for each of the criteria listed below.*

*Whether the use for which the special exception is being considered would be located, operated and maintained in a manner in conformance with the goals, policies, and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan and the provisions of this Ordinance.*

Per the applicant:

*The proposed location of a residential entrance on Barnard Street, in keeping with a common and historically appropriate urban convention within the immediate context and throughout the Historic District, conforms with the goals, policies and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan and the provisions of this Ordinance.*

Staff agrees with the applicant assessment; the criterion is met. Through research, staff found that there are 130 buildings on tithing lots with buildings that face the north-south street. 113 of these buildings are listed as contributing, were constructed within the district's period of significance, and existed when the area became a National Historic Landmark District in 1966. For example, 80 of the 130 buildings were constructed in the 1800s. Due to all of these factors, these historic buildings ARE the appropriate historic context to reference for visual compatibility when designing new construction in a similar context. The Historic & Cultural Resources element of Plan2040 (the Comprehensive Plan) supports growth and change in the historic districts while preserving historic resources to ensure "that the history of Savannah and Chatham County is retained and honored while planning for the future." (page 356)

*Whether the special exception would not be detrimental to the public interest, health, safety, welfare, function, and appearance of the adjacent uses or general vicinity.*

Per the applicant:

*The special exception will not be detrimental to the public interest, health, safety, welfare, functions and appearance of the adjacent uses or general vicinity. On the contrary, the special exception will reinforce public safety, provide access for emergency services, contribute to an active street front and be historically preceded with adjacent uses, both in the immediate context and throughout the Historic District.*

Staff agrees with the applicant assessment; the criterion is met. A lack of an entrance on a building façade facing the street creates dead zones, negatively impacting the appearance of the district at the detriment to public interest; entrances are a desired part of urban fabric and essential to district vitality.

***Additional Conditions, Restrictions and Safeguards.*** *The Savannah Downtown Historic District Board of Review may include conditions, restrictions or limitations as part of the approval in order to protect public health, safety, and welfare. When a special exception is approved with conditions, those conditions shall run with the land and shall be binding on the original applicant as well as any successor.*

Staff does not recommend any additional conditions, restrictions, or safeguards.

**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.*

***Rhythm of entrance and/or porch projection.*** *The relationship of entrances, porch projections, and walkways to buildings or structures shall be visually compatible with the contributing buildings and structures to which they are visually related.*

Staff finds that the entrance location, facing the north-south (Barnard) street consistent with contributing buildings that are visually related. Within the same block, the following contributing Barnard Street buildings have entrances facing the north-south street: 339, 344, 346, 347, 348, and 350. To construct a new building with an entrance facing anywhere other than the north-south street (when the parcel does not abut the east-west street), in this context, would be visually incompatible.

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

***Location, Tithing Blocks.*** *A building on a tithing block shall locate its primary entrance to front the east-west street.*

The standard is not met. The applicant has requested a Special Exception from this standard.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

**Approval for a Special Exception for the property located at 336 Barnard Street. The Special Exception is from the design standard that reads:**

*Sec.7.8.10.g.ii.1.b. Tithing Blocks: A building on a tithing block shall locate its primary entrance to front the east-west street.*

**To allow for the new building on the site to construct its entrance facing the north-south (Barnard) street because the Special Exception criteria are met.**

**MW: LGM**

**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.**