

TRUIST BUILDING | JOHNSON SQUARE

33 BULL STREET

SAVANNAH, GEORGIA



URBAN & ARCHITECTURAL ENHANCEMENTS

Savannah Historic District Board of Review

APRIL 2024

Sottile & Sottile, Civic Architecture

Batson Associates

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33 Bull Street, LLC

CONTENTS

Preface and Project Description

I. SITE ANALYSIS

Existing Site Plan
Site History & Evolution
Site Context Photographs
Site Analysis

II. CONCEPTUAL DESIGN & PROGRAMMING

Street Level Study
Site Programming Plan
Conceptual Details
Activating the Sidewalk
Conceptual Views

III. ARCHITECTURAL DRAWINGS

Site Survey
First Floor & Site Plan
Roof Plan
Context Elevations
Rendered Perspectives
Architectural Elevations
Wall Sections & Architectural Details

IV. MATERIALS & SPECIFICATIONS

V. PATTERNS & PRECEDENTS

Preface

The frontage along Bull Street between Congress and Broughton Streets was once home to some of the grandest and most exuberantly detailed buildings in the City of Savannah.

The Truist Building, built in the 1970's, and its associated parking structure, replaced three of those grand structures.

Today, an opportunity exists to re-imagine and transform these more recent structures to meet the context of this landmark corner.

Learning from timeless architectural principles that animate Savannah's built environment, the existing buildings can be enhanced to more fully engage with both the street level and the skyline, as well as provide greater refinement in their detailing.

These enhancements will be rendered in authentic materials of the highest quality that will improve over time with patina, allowing these buildings to more generously contribute to one of the most significant locations in the heart of Savannah.

SPRING 2024

DESIGN SUMMARY

The project consists of rehabilitation and alterations of two non-contributing buildings at the corners of Bull Street, West Congress, and Broughton Streets. This includes an existing office building and a parking garage with street level retail, connected by a bridge across West Congress Lane. Both buildings are concrete structures clad in brick veneer.

The buildings were constructed in the 1970's and reflect the unwelcoming street frontages commonly found in buildings constructed during the Urban Renewal period of the late twentieth century. The parking garage contains no fenestration at its upper levels, presenting a blank wall to the street. The office building's street level is undifferentiated from the upper levels, with no discernible articulation of a base, body, and cap in the overall facade. The brick veneer is run horizontally under the street level loggia, resulting in an uncomfortable perception of unsupported weight, with bricks essentially "glued" to the bottom of the structure overhead. Finally, the main entrance is recessed in deep shadow under the projecting upper massing, causing the building to have no clear sense of entry.

Poor detailing of the brick veneer, including a lack of expansion joints has resulted in significant cracking within the existing brick, much of which has been repaired with mismatched caulking over the course of time, further degrading the visual appearance of both buildings.

The proposed transformation of these buildings will re-activate the street level experience along the Broughton, Bull and Congress Street frontages while giving the buildings a clearly articulated composition of base, body and cap. Additionally, the enhancements will result in greater visual compatibility with the prevailing lighter colors that characterize the surrounding context, and introduce new facade detailing to overcome the fundamental design challenges outlined above using high quality materials such as granite, steel and copper.

VISUAL COMPATIBILITY

HEIGHT

The existing structures are well below the allowable height entitled by the height map, and no modifications to the existing heights are proposed.

PROPORTION OF FRONT FACADE / PROPORTION OF OPENINGS

The underlying 'bone structure' of the existing facades are generally well proportioned, though lacking in articulation and detail. The proportions will be retained but enhanced through the introduction of horizontal expression lines to articulate a clear base, middle and top. The proportions of existing openings in the office building are visually compatible, and these proportions will remain unaltered. The Broughton Street building contains no voids on upper levels due to structured parking use, although the neighboring historic building to the east (currently Levy Jewelers) also contains no upper-level openings. A series of facade enhancements including large-scale awnings and a raised expression line are planned to address the vacant character of the upper levels.

RHYTHM OF ENTRANCES / PORCH PROJECTION

The rhythm of projecting awnings and entrances along Broughton Street facade is visually compatible with the contributing buildings in the immediate context. The rhythm of entrances on the office building are also visually compatible, as the proposed enhancements create a hierarchy of entrances and a rhythm of arches that is derivative of buildings in the direct vicinity, including the Manger Building.

RELATIONSHIP OF MATERIALS, TEXTURE AND COLOR

The existing dark colored brick is visually dissonant with the colors found in most of the surrounding buildings. Additionally, the singular and uniform materiality and texture is incompatible with the rich diversity of higher-quality materials, colors and textures found in the facades of contributing buildings in the immediate context. By repairing the existing brick and painting it a lighter color, while articulating the facade with contrasting details in granite, steel and copper, the proposed enhancements bring the materiality, color, and texture of the buildings into greater visual compatibility with the contributing buildings to which they are visually related.

DIRECTIONAL EXPRESSION

The directional expression of visually related contributing buildings is primarily vertical in nature, with intentional horizontal expression lines dividing the facade expression into a base, body, and cap. The proposed enhancements bring the directional expression of the existing facades into greater visual compatibility with the contributing buildings to which they are visually related.

Select Savannah Downtown Historic District Design Standards (Alterations to Non-Contributing Resources)

Materials: Proposed materials, including brick, granite, copper and painted metalwork are all materials of high quality that improve with time. All are permitted materials commonly found on contributing buildings throughout the Historic District.

Finishes and Treatments: The proposed color and finishes are visually compatible with contributing resources within the block and ward.

Door Location: The door locations on the Broughton Street building will remain in their existing locations. The office building, which is located on a Tithing Block, has its primary entrance on the east-west street (Congress) with additional entrances to street level uses on the corner of Bull and Congress Street and on Bull Street.

Commercial Storefronts: The first story of both commercial structures is designed as new in-kind storefronts, or retains existing storefronts in place. Glazing area exceeds 55% of surface area. Glass color will be retained as existing or replaced with new glazing to match existing. New storefronts are set in 32 inches from the face of the building. All storefront entrances fronting Broughton Street will be retained in place as existing.

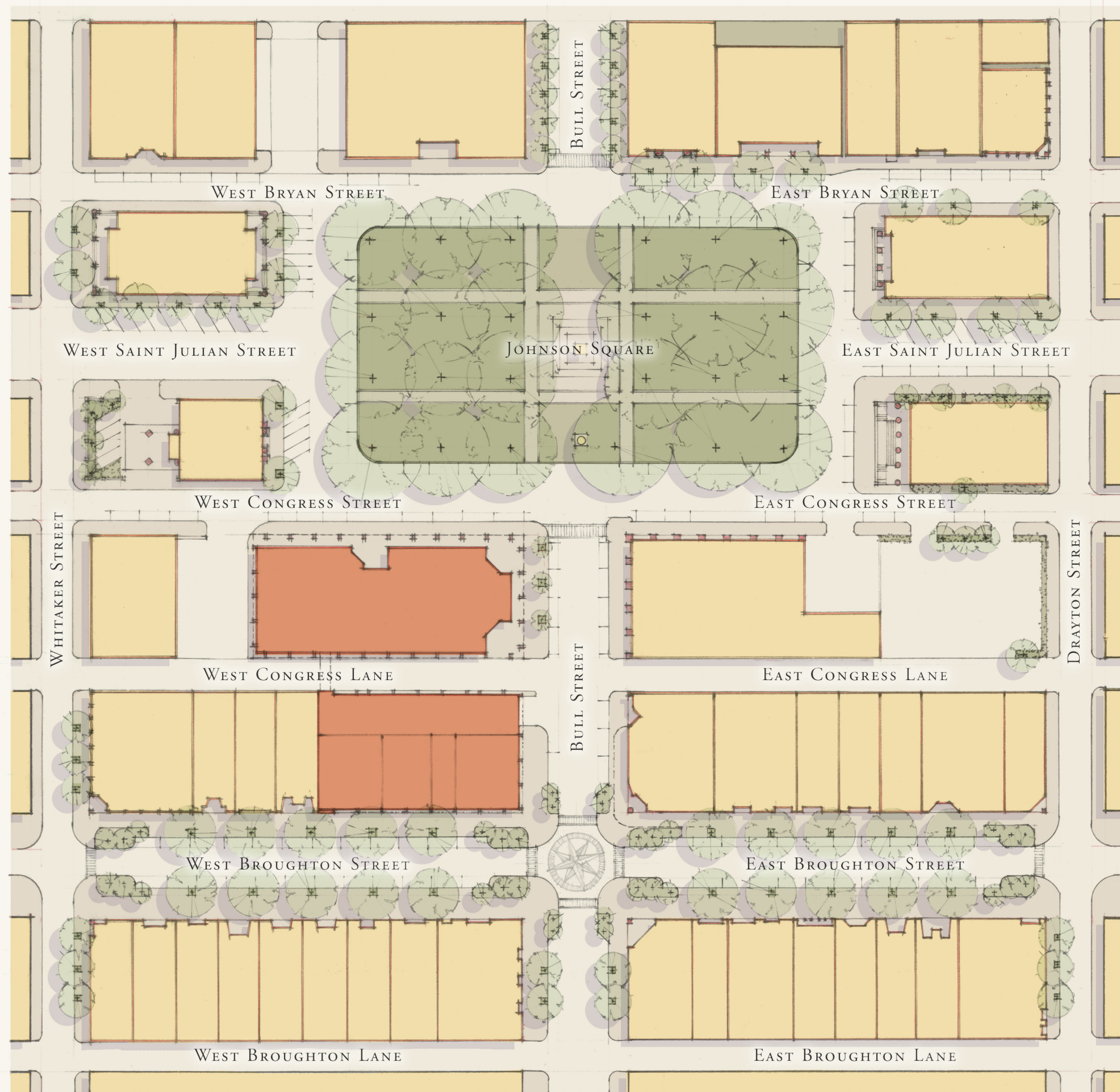
Awnings, Canopies and Shade Structures: All awnings extending above the sidewalk exceed the required minimum vertical clearance of 8 feet. Awnings on the Broughton Street building have a vertical clearance of 15 feet and canopies on the Congress Street building have a vertical clearance of 12 feet. Awnings on the Broughton Street building are canvas on a metal support structure, and canopies on the Congress Street building are constructed of painted metalwork.

Roofs: While projecting cornices are being added to the existing parapets, the roof shapes and configurations will remain unchanged.

DESIGN SUMMARY & VISUAL COMPATIBILITY

I. SITE ANALYSIS

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THE SITE

This centrally located site is one of the most significant and generously zoned locations in the City of Savannah. It provides the unique opportunity and responsibility of addressing several of Savannah's most important places - Johnson Square, Bull Street, and the heart of Broughton Street.

Each of these locations present their own particular opportunities. Other assets the site presents are the control of both sides of a lane, and an existing bridge that crosses above it.

EXISTING SITE PLAN



NORTH
SCALE: 1" = 80'
0 20 40 80 160

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SAVANNAH, GEORGIA



GREENE MONUMENT AND BANK BUILDINGS, SAVANNAH, GA.



8 LOOKING SOUTH ON BULL STREET, SAVANNAH, GA.



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HISTORY OF THE SITE

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A GREAT STREET LEVEL

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Bull and Congress Today...

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SITE CONTEXT PHOTOS

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Bull and Broughton...

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