



SAVANNAH HISTORIC DISTRICT BOARD OF REVIEW

REQUEST FOR CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS

Petitioner: Ward Architecture + Preservation, Josh Ward

MPC File No.: 26-001290-COA

Address: 402 East Liberty Street

PIN: 20015 18011

Zoning: D-R

Staff Reviewer: Caitlin Chamberlain

Date: April 8, 2026

NATURE OF REQUEST:

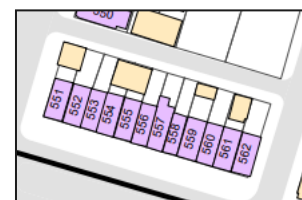
The applicant is requesting approval to construct an accessory dwelling unit at the rear of 402 East Liberty Street. The project also includes the removal of a non-contributing carport and a non-historic wood fence, with a replacement 8' brick garden wall and wooden gate, as well as the removal of non-historic lap siding infill on the rear elevation, to be replaced with brick to match.

CONTEXT/SURROUNDING AREA:

402 East Liberty Street was built in 1882 and is a contributing resource within the National Historic Landmark District and the local Savannah Downtown Historic District. It is the end unit of a row of six connected Italianate style rowhomes. The building directly next door, at 404 East Liberty Street, has a similar ADU project proposed. This is intentional, as both owners have agreed to having the connected ADUs constructed together. There is a non-contributing parking structure composed of metal poles supporting a roof, which functions as a parking area, but will be removed to make space for the ADU.



Along the lane are various other non-contributing resources in the form of ADUs or one-story garages, with the one exception being 242 Habersham Street, which is on a corner lot and across the lane from 402 East Liberty Street.



FINDINGS:

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.

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.

The historic character of the principal house will not be negatively impacted. The removal of the non-historic lap siding infill on the rear elevation is appropriate, as it will be filled back in with brick to bring it closer to its original state. The infill will be recessed so as not to create a false sense of history.

The ADU design will be subordinate to the house and is not attached to the building. It could be removed in the future without causing damage to the house. The existing parking structure has not gained historical significance in its own right and thus its removal will not mean loss of integrity to the property.

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.

Height. New construction shall be permitted to build to the number of stories as shown on the "Savannah Downtown Historic District Height Map," referred to herein as "Height Map," and the overall height of a building and the height of individual components of a building or structure shall be visually compatible to the contributing buildings and structures to which it is visually related.

Height will be further discussed in the Accessory Structures section but in terms of visual compatibility the ADU is shorter in height not only of the rowhouses along this block but also any contributing resources within the viewshed of the ADUs.

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 standard is met.

Rhythm of structures on streets. *The relationship of a building or structure to the open space between it and adjacent buildings or structures shall be visually compatible with the open spaces between contributing buildings and structures to which it is visually related.*

The standard is met. It is not uncommon to see connected accessory buildings along the lanes of connected rowhouses.

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 standard is met. Materials include:

- Cherokee Brick in “Savannah Gray” in a running bond for exterior walls of ADU and a new 8’ garden wall which also will include a wood entry gate, painted Sherwin Williams “Alexandrite”
- Garage doors- Garage Door Design Center wood carriage house type doors painted Sherwin Williams “Mindful Gray”
- Marvin Ultimate aluminum clad double-hung and casement windows
- Wood doors with glass transoms and lites
- Hinged and operable wood shutters painted Sherwin Williams “Alexandrite” green
- Decorative wood bracket
- Smooth Hardie board trim
- Roof of ADU will have TPO not visible due to being a flat roof; the small porch roof over the entry door facing the house will be standing seam metal

Roof shapes. *The roof shape of a building or structure shall be visually compatible with the contributing buildings and structures to which it is visually related.*

A flat roof is appropriate in this case and seen on contributing buildings in the viewshed of the proposed ADU.

Scale of a building. *The mass of a building or structure and size of windows, door openings, porches column spacing, stairs, balconies and additions shall be visually compatible with the contributing buildings and structures to which the structure is visually related.*

The standard is met. The scale is appropriate for an accessory building.

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.

Height. *The number of stories as shown on the Height Map shall be permitted. Variances from the Height Map shall not be permitted.*

The proposed ADU is two stories which is appropriate and compatible.

Building Form. *Building form is based on the height, mass and envelope of a building. The proposed building form for new construction shall comply with the following:*

A proposed building located on an east-west through street shall utilize a contributing building form fronting the same street within the same ward or in an adjacent ward.

The form of the building is a simple box indicative of the building type seen throughout the district, and certainly within the ward. The applicant provided a photographic analysis of other historic carriage houses in close proximity, which found a variety of scales and roof forms. As the applicant stated, “Our design captures the spirit of many good examples of historic masonry carriage houses nearby.”

Setbacks, Side and rear yards. *Side and rear yard setbacks shall not be required.*

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

Exterior Walls, Permitted Materials.

Residential exterior walls shall be finished in brick, wood, or fiber cement siding with a smooth finish or true stucco. Commercial exterior walls shall be finished in brick, true stucco, concrete formed or assembled as stone, precast concrete panels with finish to simulate stucco texture, polished stone and glazed brick or tile where similar historic examples exist along the same block front.

The exterior walls will be finished in brick, laid in a running bond to contrast with the main house, which has a common bond. The brick color, size, and texture will still be a close match to the historic house.

Exterior Walls, Finishes and Treatments.

Colors, stains, and finishes shall be visually compatible with contributing resources within the block. If none exist, the color shall be compatible with contributing resources within the ward.

Brick is appropriate and compatible with contributing resources within the ward.

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

Doors, 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.*

The standard is met as noted on the drawings.

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

The standard is met for the garage doors and human doors.

Doors, Prohibited Materials. *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.*

None of the above prohibited materials are proposed.

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

Windows, Configuration.

All windows facing a street, exclusive of storefronts, basement and top story windows, shall be rectangular and shall have a vertical to horizontal ratio of not less than 5:3; provided, however, nothing in this section precludes an arched window being used. Accent windows may be round or other shapes.

The windows facing Habersham Street meet the standard, and the lane-facing elevation windows also meet the standard.

Windows facing a street shall be double or triple hung, awning, casement or Palladian.

The windows are a mix of double hung and casement, which both meet the standard.

The centerline of window and door openings shall align vertically on the primary façade.

Double glazed, simulated divided light, windows shall be permitted provided that the following are met: The muntin is 7/8 inches or less; The muntin profile shall simulate traditional putty glazing; The lower sash rail shall be wider than the meeting and top rails; There shall be a spacer bar in between double panes of glass, and Extrusions shall be covered with appropriate molding.

Between-the-glass, snap-in or applied muntins shall not be permitted.

Framing members shall be covered with appropriate trim; trim shall feature a header, surrounds, and pronounced sill where appropriate.

Window sashes shall be inset a minimum of three (3) inches from the façade of a building, excluding exterior surfaces with wood siding.

The distance between windows shall be not less than for adjacent contributing buildings, nor more than two (2) times the width of the windows on primary facades. The Board may waive strict compliance with this standard where historic precedent exists within the visually related context and is visually compatible.

Paired or grouped windows shall be permitted, provided the individual sashes have a vertical to horizontal ratio of not less than 5:3.

Bay windows shall extend to the ground unless they are oriel, beveled or are supported by brackets.

The above window configuration standards are met.

Windows, Materials.

Window casings and sashes shall be made of metal, wood or clad wood material.

The windows will be aluminum- the standard is met.

Window glass shall be transparent with no dark tints or reflective effects (except for stained glass windows). This provision does not preclude the use of Low Emissivity glass.

The window glass will be clear.

Solid vinyl windows shall be prohibited.

This is not proposed.

Shutters.

Exterior shutters shall consist of a durable wood.

Shutters shall be hinged and operable and sized to fit the window opening.

The placement of the horizontal rail(s) shall correspond to the location of the meeting rail(s) of the window.

The shutter standards are met. False window openings will be installed and infilled with louvered shutters that meet the above standards.

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

Roofs, Configuration.

Shed roof, and porch roofs, subordinate and attached to the primary building, shall be pitched between 2:12 and 6:12. Where historically appropriate, flat roofs may be utilized.

The shed roof above the front entry (facing towards the primary house) is 2:12, thus meeting the standard. The roof of the ADU is flat, which is historically appropriate.

Parapets shall have a stringcourse and a coping.

The standard is met.

Roofs, Materials.

Roof coverings shall be standing seam metal, v-crimp, slate or equivalent synthetic, tile, or architectural asphalt or similar shingles.

Metal roofs shall have a metal drip edge covering all edges.

The only visible roof is the shed roof above the front entry door, which meets the above standards.

Fences, Trellises and Walls. *Fences and walls shall comply with Sec. 9.6, Fences and Walls except as provided below:*

Fences, Trellises and Walls, Configuration.

Fences, trellises or walls shall not exceed 11 feet in height; however, where adjoining walls exceed 11 feet, any new wall may be constructed to the height of the existing wall. Rooftop trellises may exceed 11 feet in height, provided they are visually compatible.

The proposed brick garden wall with a wooden gate will be 8 feet. The standard is met.

A minimum of five (5) feet must be provided between a fence and a building where they are parallel.

The fence is on the corner lot between the buildings. The standard is met.

Fences, Trellises and Walls, Materials.

Fences and walls facing a public street shall be constructed of the material and color of the primary building; provided however, iron or extruded aluminum fencing may be used with a masonry structure.

The house is brick, and the garden wall will also be brick.

Accessory Structures. *Accessory structures, including accessory dwellings, shall comply with the Visual Compatibility Criteria, the above design standards, the requirements set forth in Sec. 8.7, Accessory Structures and Uses, except as provided below:*

Accessory Structures, Configuration. *Accessory structures shall be located in the rear yard even if there is no lane access.*

The height and mass of the primary building shall not be exceeded by any accessory building or structure on the same parcel.

Accessory buildings and structures shall not be more than two (2) stories tall.

New accessory dwellings and garages may have up to a five (5) foot lane setback to allow a turning radius into the garage.

Roofs shall be side gable, hip with parapet, flat or shed hidden by a parapet.

Driveway aprons shall not be erected on the public right-of-way.

The above standards are met.

Accessory Structures, Doors and Openings.

Where garage doors front streets or are adjacent to sidewalks, they shall resemble carriage house doors.

Since this is on a corner lot, the garage doors proposed resemble carriage house doors, thereby meeting the standard.

Garage openings shall not exceed 12 feet in width.

This design includes a two-car garage, where each opening is 8'6" which meets the standard.

The following standards from the Sec 8.7 - Accessory Structures and Uses apply:

Accessory Structures and Uses, Generally. *All accessory structures and uses shall be consistent with all standards of the base zoning district (Article 5.0), any applicable overlay district (Article 7.0) and any applicable use standards (Article 8.0), except as expressly set forth below. Accessory structure and uses shall:*

Be accessory and clearly incidental and subordinate to a permitted principal use. No accessory use may be established on a site prior to the establishment of a permitted principal use.

Be located on the same property as the principal use or structure.

Not involve uses or structures not in keeping with the character of the principal use or principal structure served.

Be located within a district that permits the principal use.

Not be erected in any required setback area, except as expressly set forth in this Ordinance.

A parcel shall include only one accessory dwelling unit or one caretaker's dwelling unit.

The above standards are met.

Accessory Dwelling Units (not including Caretaker's Dwelling Unit). *One (1) accessory dwelling unit shall be permitted as an accessory use to a principal dwelling located in the A-1, RSF-, RTF-, RMF-, TR-, TN-, TC-, D- and PD districts. Such use is not required to be included in the gross residential density calculations. Manufactured homes, shipping containers, recreational vehicles, and travel trailers shall not be used as accessory dwelling units. For such use, the following shall apply:*

Accessory Dwelling Units, Location.

The unit may be attached to or detached from the principal dwelling.

The unit is detached.

Detached accessory dwelling units shall meet the same side-yard setback requirement as the principal structure. Such units shall be separated from the principal structure by at least 10 feet.

There are 0-foot side yard setbacks and there is more than 10 feet between the principal structure and the proposed ADU.

Accessory Dwelling Units, Building Size.

The building footprint of the accessory dwelling unit shall be a maximum of 40% of the building footprint of the principal dwelling not to exceed 700 square feet.

The standard is met. The footprint of the principal dwelling is 990 square feet, and the footprint of the ADU is 396 square feet, which is exactly 40%.

The accessory dwelling unit shall contain no more than one (1) bedroom.

Only one bedroom is proposed.

Accessory Dwelling Units, Architectural Style. *Such use shall be designed in a similar architectural style as the principal dwelling. If the site is located within an overlay district, the standards of the overlay district shall apply.*

The design is of a similar style but not a replica in miniature of the principal dwelling.

Accessory Dwelling Units, Parking and Access.

If parking is provided for the accessory dwelling, it shall be provided on the same lot on which the principal dwelling is located.

There is parking in the form of the two-car garage at the ground floor level.

Accessory Dwelling Units, Height.

Accessory dwelling units shall not exceed 25 feet or the height of the principal building, whichever is less.

The ADU is proposed to be 22 feet, which is below the maximum and shorter than the principal building.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the request to construct an accessory dwelling unit and brick garden wall at 402 East Liberty Street, including removal of the non-contributing carport and non-contributing fence, as well as removal of the non-historic lap siding infill to replace with recessed brick infill on the rear elevation, as requested because the proposed work is visually compatible and meets the standards.

MW: CC

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.