



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: J. Elder Studio, Jerome Elder

MPC File No.: 26-001298-COA

Address: 200 West Bryan Street

PIN: 20016 01004

Zoning: D-CBD

Staff Reviewer: Caitlin Chamberlain

Date: April 8, 2026

NATURE OF REQUEST:

The applicant is requesting approval to install a total of three (3) illuminated wall and above-canopy signs for the Digby Hotel, located at 200 West Bryan Street.

CONTEXT/SURROUNDING AREA:

200 West Bryan Street is a newly constructed hotel and thus is a non-contributing resource within the National Historic Landmark District and the local Savannah Downtown Historic District. The building is in a heavily commercial area in the Ellis Square vicinity where there are commercial businesses and other hotels in the immediate area.

FINDINGS:

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.*

***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. The signs will have an aluminum background with halo-lit letters that will have a warm white glow.

Signs. Signs, where permitted, shall be visually compatible with contributing buildings and structures to which they are visually related.

The standard is met. The signs are appropriately placed and proportional to the size of the building and do not overpower the view of any contributing buildings which it relates to.

The following standards from the Sec. 9.9.17 - Special Sign Districts apply:

Special Sign Districts. In Addition to the requirements of Sec. 9.9.1 through 9.9.13, signs in the following special sign districts shall comply with the provisions of this Section, provided that where such provisions are in conflict with any requirements of Sec. 9.9.1 through 9.9.13, the requirements of this section shall prevail.

Historic Special Sign District Boundaries.

Savannah Downtown Historic Sign District. The Savannah Downtown Historic Sign District shall include any area location within the Savannah Downtown Historic Overlay District, with the exception of City Market, Broughton Street, Factors Walk, and Plant Riverside Sign Districts.

200 West Bryan Street falls within this sign district.

Signs Allowed in Historic Special Sign Districts. Sign types in historic special sign districts shall be allowed in accordance with the following table. Regardless of sign type, with the exception of decorative pole signs and signs painted on walls, non-illuminated signs that are three (3) square feet in size or less shall be permitted without a sign permit (COA).

Table 9.9-5

SEPTEMBER 1, 2019 / ARTICLE 9.0 GENERAL SITE STANDARDS / SEC. 9.9 SIGNS / 9.9.17 SPECIAL SIGN DISTRICTS

Table 9.9-5 Signs Allowed in Historic Special Sign Districts					
Sign Type	Savannah Downtown Historic and City Market	Broughton Street	Factors Walk	Neighborhood	Plant Riverside
✓ = Sign Type Allowed * = Sign Type Allowed for Nonresidential Uses Only -- = Sign Type Not Allowed COA = Certificate of Appropriateness Required					
Temporary Sign Not Requiring a Permit	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Permit Required					
Building Signs					
Incidental Sign	✓COA	✓COA	✓COA	✓COA	✓COA
Canopy or Awning Sign	*COA	*COA	*COA	*COA	✓COA
Under-Canopy or Under-Awning Sign	*COA	*COA	*COA	*COA	✓COA
Above-Canopy or Above-Awning Sign	*COA	*COA	*COA	*COA	✓COA
Hanging Sign	*COA	*COA	*COA	*COA	✓COA
Marquee Sign	*COA Downtown Historic District Only	*COA	--	--	--
Projecting Sign	*COA	*COA	*COA	*COA	✓COA
Signs Painted on Walls	*COA	*COA	*COA	*COA	✓COA
Window Sign [1]	*	*	*	*	✓COA
Wall Sign[1]	*COA	*COA	*COA	*COA	✓COA

Special Sign Standards for the Savannah Downtown Historic, City Market, Broughton Street, Factors Walk and Neighborhood Sign Districts.

Sign Illumination.

Signs shall not be illuminated unless specifically indicated below.

Where illumination is permitted, reverse silhouette or “cut-out” letters are encouraged to reduce glare where back lighting is applied.

The above standards are met for the two wall signs. However, in the section about above-canopy signs, it is not specifically indicated, therefore illumination is not permitted for this sign type.

Above-Canopy or Above-Awning Signs.

A sign attached parallel above a canopy or awning. This sign type cannot be combined with a canopy or awning sign or a below-canopy or awning sign.

One (1) such sign attached to a canopy or awning shall be permitted for each principal pedestrian entrance providing public access.

There are no other canopy or awning signs proposed aside from the one above the canopy at the entrance on the Barnard Street elevation.

Such sign shall not exceed an area of more than one (1) square foot of sign area per horizontal linear foot of canopy or awning.

The sign area is 15.8 square feet, which meets the standard because it is within the area of the canopy.

Signs on any side of an awning shall be considered a single sign.

This is a single sign.

Such sign shall not be less than eight (8) feet above the pedestrian walkway and shall not be less than one (1) foot from the outer edge of the canopy or awning.

The standard is met.

The ordinance does not specifically state that above-canopy signs can be illuminated. Therefore, staff recommends that the applicant apply for a variance for the illumination or change the sign to non-illuminated.

Ground, Projecting and Wall Signs.

Savannah Downtown Historic and City Market Sign Districts.

Ground, Projecting and Wall Signs. Only one (1) ground, projecting or wall sign shall be permitted for each business establishment. Where a business establishment fronts on more than one (1) street or pedestrian walkway providing public access to the establishment, one (1) wall or projecting sign for each frontage providing public access shall be permitted.

The hotel fronts on more than one street (Bryan and Barnard Streets) where there will be one wall sign on each frontage.

No portion of a sign shall be erected within two (2) feet of a curb line.

The standard is met.

The aggregate sign area shall not exceed a size of more than one (1) square foot of sign area per linear foot of lot frontage along a given street or shall meet the following size requirements, whichever is the most restrictive:

*D-C, **D-CBD**, D-X, I-L, I-LT Zoning Districts:*

40 sq. ft.: Wall sign (max)

The wall sign on the Bryan Street elevation is 24.15 square feet and the wall sign on the Barnard Street elevation is 4.25 square feet. Both signs meet the standard.

Wall and projecting signs shall be erected only on the signable area of the structure and shall not project over the roofline or parapet wall elevation of the structure.

The Bryan Street wall sign will be affixed to the building between the fifth and sixth floors. The smaller wall sign on the Barnard Street elevation will be installed just below the upper roof parapet.

Wall signs shall be mounted flat to a wall of the façade of the building.

Both wall signs will be mounted flat.

Ground, projecting and wall signs in D-C, D-CBD, D-X, I-L, and I-LT districts may be illuminated in accordance with Sec. 9.9.6 and 9.9.17.g.i.

The signs are both proposed to be illuminated.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the request to install the two (2) illuminated wall signs at the Digby Hotel, located at 200 West Bryan Street with the following condition because the proposed work is otherwise visually compatible and meets the standards:

- 1. Apply for a variance to allow for illumination of the above-canopy sign or change it to a non-illuminated sign.**

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.