

August 11, 2026

RE: File No. 26-002944-COA
603 Whitaker Street
Request for Solar Panels

Regarding the subject COA Request before the Savannah Downtown Historic Board of Review, we wish to offer our comments and concerns about this item and to express our disapproval of it.

The Downtown Savannah Historic District is being eroded away by numerous requests for special exceptions, variances, and expansion of existing standards. The Savannah Historic District is “dying by a thousand knife cuts.” Hundreds of requests like this one continue to dilute the unique character of our City.

This request is for solar panels which are certainly not historic in nature or appearance for a building built in 1888. The Staff report states that the solar panels will be minimally visible and “will only be in view from the small through street behind the building and will have no negative impacts on the public.” This conclusion is dismissive and understates the potential impact. The very sight of the panels is negative. Howard Street is not a “small” street but a busy one. The straight line views from the corner of Howard and W. Huntingdon Streets (approx. 50 feet from the property) will be significant. Howard and W. Huntingdon Streets are busy streets with CAT buses, tour vehicles, daily commuter parking, tourist parking, and resident parking for the numerous homes which border and view the subject property on the South, East, and North sides. The solar panels will be viewed from multiple residences from the ground and upper level windows.

The Staff report continues to state that the historic character of the property will not change. This seems to be convenient logic since adding something that is non-historic new technology as an additional layer on the roof clearly changes the property. Why, then, am I not allowed to install thermal pane windows on my historic property?

I don't find any notes or documentation about potential reflective sunlight off the panels. Our property is East of the subject property directly across Howard Street. We view the subject property from the rear of our property, use Howard Street for parking, and have recycle/sanitation on Howard Street. The roof slope is 7:12 according to the documents. Has there been any assessment of the potential glare and reflection of sunlight on the neighboring properties and public rights of way? We believe that this should be a concern.

In summary, we are opposed to the approval of this request No. 26-002944-COA.

Respectfully submitted,

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