



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: Coastal Canvas, Austin Webb

MPC File No.: 26-003504-COA

Address: 107 West Broughton Street

PIN: 20004 43011

Zoning: D-CBD

Staff Reviewer: Alexander Merced

Date: August 12, 2026

NATURE OF REQUEST:

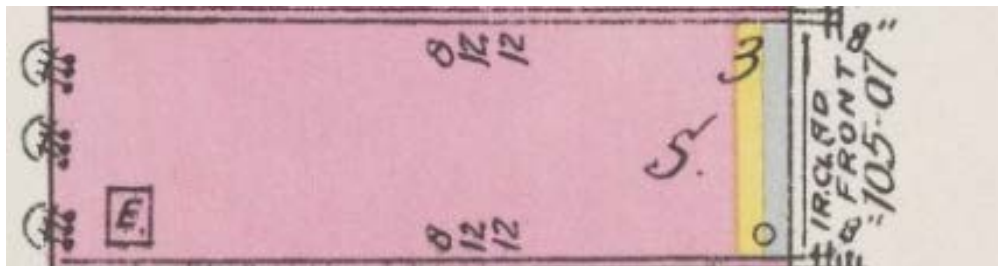
The applicant would like to install a canopy and above-canopy sign on the storefront located at 107 West Broughton Street. They are also applying for a variance in order to allow for that sign to be illuminated.

The variance is requested from standard 9.9.17.g.i.1 that reads, "Signs shall not be illuminated unless specifically indicated below" where above-canopy signs are not specifically indicated.

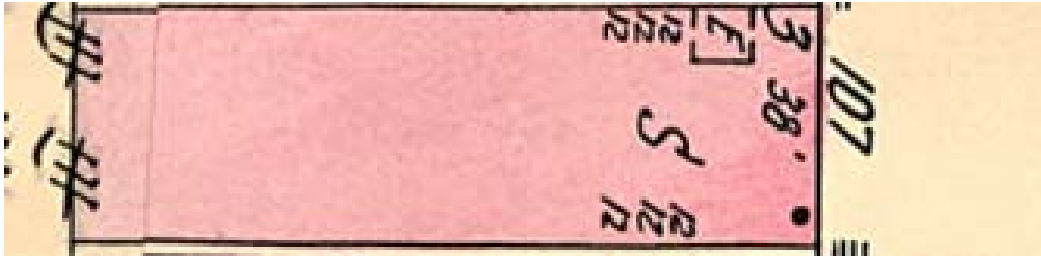
CONTEXT/SURROUNDING AREA:

The building was originally constructed sometime between 1884 and 1898 but was altered a number of times up until 1935, when it was brought to its current configuration. It is a contributing resource within the National Historic Landmark District and the local Savannah Downtown Historic District. It sits midblock on the south side of the main commercial stretch of West Broughton Street and is surrounded mostly by contributing buildings.

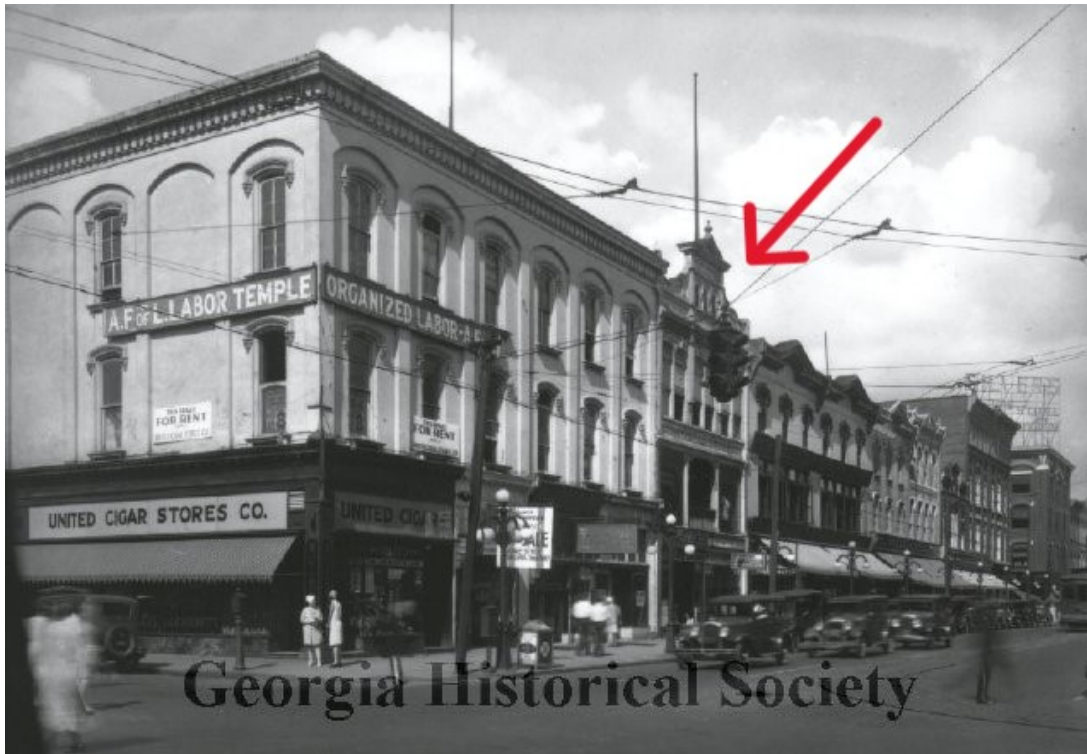
Always used for commercial purposes, the building once had an ornate gable-topped façade, which was removed sometime between 1929 and 1935. According to the Georgia Historic Resources survey, the final alteration was made in 1935 by I. Karpf, which introduced the art deco style façade with the "Karpf" name above the third-floor windows that we see today.



1. 1898 Sanborn Map showing the previous iron clad decorative façade



2. 1955 Sanborn Map showing the previous iron clad decorative facade had been removed



3. Image from 1929 showing the previous decorative facade before art deco alteration in 1935

FINDINGS:

The following standards from the Preservation Brief 44 - Awnings apply:

Purpose of Awnings. They provide natural climate control by blocking out the sun's rays while admitting daylight and allowing air to circulate between interior and exterior. Awnings permit window-shopping on rainy days; they protect show window displays from fading due to sunlight. On the primary facade and near eye level, they are central to a building's appearance. Continued concerns over energy efficiency have also persuaded building owners and developers to use awnings to reduce heat gain, glare, and cooling costs.

Visual Appropriateness. Because awnings were so common until the mid-twentieth century, they are visually appropriate for many historic buildings, unlike some other means of energy conservation.

Installing New Awnings. Since awning fabrics are subject to weathering and deterioration and hardware is exposed to the elements, some awnings may be beyond repair. Depending

on the circumstances, new awnings may replace deteriorated existing awnings in kind or be installed where awnings were once in place as seen in pictorial or physical documentation. In other instances, they may be newly installed where no awning previously existed, provided they are compatible with the historic building. Whatever the circumstances, it is important to select an appropriate awning shape, material, frame dimensions, signage (if any), and placement on the facade.

New Awning Where No Awning Exists and No Evidence of Past Awning. Where no awning currently exists, and there is no evidence of a past one, it may still be possible to add an awning to a historic building without altering distinctive features, damaging historic fabric or changing the building's historic character. A new awning should be compatible with the features and characteristics of a historic building, as well as with neighboring buildings, or the historic district, if applicable. Historic photographs of similar neighboring buildings with awnings can also be helpful in choosing an appropriate installation. When selecting and installing a new awning, a number of other factors should be considered: shape, scale, massing, placement, signage, and color.

Awning Signage. Awnings on commercial buildings offer valuable advertising space. Photographs from the mid-19th century show a wide range of lettering, logos, business names, types of trade, street numbers-on the sloped coverings and side flaps of awnings.

The most common placement of a shop proprietor's business name or service was on the valance hanging down from the awning edge. The front valance provided a flat surface visible whether the awning was retracted against the building wall or fully extended. Many establishments, however, left their awnings unadorned without any lettering.

Creating large lettered signs on a new awning is not appropriate in all cases. Historic examples of such lettering often reflected the character of a district, with more upscale retail areas, for example, being more reserved than wholesale districts. Contemporary awning lettering can add visual interest and commercial identity but should be designed in keeping with the historic character of a building and its historic district.

There are multiple contributing buildings with similar canopy structures and similar signage throughout the Broughton Street commercial strip. Examples will be shown below.

The following standards from the Sec 3.21.10 Variance Criteria apply:

Variance Criteria.

Criteria for Approval. The responsible review authority shall make a finding that the variance criteria does comply or does not comply with each individual criterion provided below. The Zoning Board of Appeals shall consider the criteria below when determining whether a variance shall be provided:

General Consistency. The variance shall be consistent with the intent of this Ordinance and the Comprehensive Plan, and shall not be injurious to the neighborhood or otherwise detrimental to the public health, safety or welfare.

The Comprehensive Plan speaks to historic preservation as a way to enhance the quality of life in Savannah and Chatham County, with specific stated goals including helping to create a healthy community through preservation, continuing to develop Heritage Tourism in the area along with its related economic benefits, and increasing climate resiliency in the region. Because the subject property is located in the most prominent commercial corridor downtown, the quality of life in the surrounding neighborhoods will not be negatively impacted by the light. Furthermore, the proposed sign illumination is not injurious to the historic character of the subject building or the rest of the Broughton Street commercial stretch as a whole, and as such would not run counter to any of these goals stated in the Comprehensive Plan. Therefore, staff feels that the proposed variance is not injurious to the neighborhood or otherwise detrimental to the public health, safety, or welfare. The criterion is met.

Special Conditions.

Special conditions and/or circumstances exist which are peculiar to the land, buildings or structures involved and which are not applicable to other lands, buildings or structures in the same zoning district.

The special conditions and/or circumstances do not result from the actions of the applicant.

The special conditions and/or circumstances are not purely financial in nature so as to allow the applicant to use the land, buildings or structures involved more profitably or to save money.

Per the applicant: The property is uniquely constrained by its historic status and existing storefront proportions. These conditions were not created by the applicant and are not financial in nature. The request is made to achieve an architecturally appropriate storefront improvement.

Staff analysis: This particular building does not have a special condition that is peculiar to it when compared to other buildings in the same zoning district, as all structures in the historic district are subject to this ordinance. The request is to increase the visibility of the building signage in order to generate further business, thus making this request financial in nature. The above criteria are not met.

Literal Interpretation. Literal interpretation of the provisions of the regulations would deprive the applicant of rights commonly enjoyed by other properties in the same zoning district under the terms of the Ordinance and would result in unreasonable hardship on the applicant.

Per the applicant: The subject property is an existing commercial building within Savannah's Historic District. The existing façade and historic context limit the available methods for providing effective business identification while maintaining compatibility with the surrounding streetscape. Strictly applying the Design Standards prohibiting illuminated signage would create an unnecessary practical difficulty by preventing an appropriately scaled, pedestrian-oriented sign integrated into the canopy.

Staff analysis: Other properties in the same zoning district have to abide by the same regulation and illuminated above-canopy signs are not common on the Broughton commercial corridor. There is no unreasonable hardship on the applicant because the canopy and sign will be in a prominent area which is already highly illuminated and has heavy foot and vehicle traffic. The criterion is not met.

Minimum Variance. The variance, if granted, shall be the minimum variance necessary to make possible the reasonable use of land, buildings, or structures.

The applicant is not requesting a variance for sign size, location, projection, or canopy dimensions. The illumination is the minimum relief necessary. The criterion is met.

Special Privilege Not Granted. The variance shall not confer on the applicant's property any special privilege that is denied by this Ordinance to other lands, buildings or structures in the same zoning district.

Per the applicant: Approval would not grant a special privilege. The request is limited solely to allowing discreet architectural illumination integrated into the storefront and does not seek additional sign area or other exceptions.

Staff analysis: Other buildings in this district must abide by the regulation and granting the variance would confer special privilege to the applicant. The criterion is not met.

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.

The historic character of the building will not be affected and no defining features will be altered. The standard is met.

Secretary of the Interior's Standards 3– Physical Record. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.

Historically there was no canopy on the building, however, as noted in the Preservation Brief referenced previously, it is appropriate to install canopies or awnings where there never was one, as long as they are in keeping and compatible with the surrounding area. The standard is met.

Secretary of the Interior's Standards 9– New Additions to not Damage. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.

No character defining features or materials will be destroyed. The stucco at the connecting points can be easily repaired in the future if necessary. The standard is met.

Secretary of the Interior's Standards 10– New Additions Reversible. *New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.*

The canopy can be removed in the future if necessary. The standard is met.

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.*

On this commercial section of Broughton Street, now and historically, there are multiple buildings, contributing and non-contributing, with a similar type of canopy and signage. The standard is met.



4. 120 West Broughton across the street from the subject property – Contributing



5. 2 East Broughton Street two blocks east of the subject property – Contributing



6. 132 East Broughton three blocks east of subject property – Contributing



7. 201 East Broughton three blocks east of the subject property – Contributing

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.

As noted previously, there are many examples of similar styles, textures, and colors on contributing buildings throughout Broughton Street. The standard is met.

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

As noted previously, there are many examples of similar signage throughout Broughton Street. The standard is met.

Awnings, Canopies, and Shade Structures. Awnings, canopies and shade structures within the public right-of-way may be permitted with the approval of the encroachment by the Mayor and Aldermen and provided that the following criteria are met:

Awnings, Canopies, and Shade Structures, Configuration.

Installations extending above the public right-of-way shall have a minimum vertical clearance of eight (8) feet above the sidewalk.

The canopy will have a clearance of 12'2" above the sidewalk. The standard is met.

Awnings and canopies shall be integrated structurally and architecturally into the design of the façade.

Installations shall not obscure the character-defining features of historic façades.

The above standards are met.

Back-lit (internally lit) awnings shall be prohibited.

The applicant is applying for a variance in order to allow for sign illumination.

Awnings shall not connect two (2) facades.

The standard is met.

Awnings, Canopies, and Shade Structures, Materials.

Installations shall be constructed of canvas, other equivalent cloth, metal, or glass.

Supports shall consist of metal or wood. PVC shall not be permitted.

The canopy and its supports will be made of metal. The above standards are met.

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.

Broughton Street Sign District. *The Broughton Street Sign District shall be bounded on the north by the centerline of Congress Lane, on the east by the western right-of-way line of Habersham Street, on the south by the centerline of Broughton Lane, or the extension thereof, and on the west by the eastern right-of-way line of Martin Luther King, Jr., Boulevard.*

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).*

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.

As noted previously, the applicant is applying for a variance to allow for illumination, and if that variance is granted, the letters will be reverse silhouette letters. The standard is met.

Restrictions on Materials.

Signs using reflective paint, lettering or graphics; and

Paper, cardboard and dry erase boards shall not be used as materials for signs.

The above standards are met.

Above-Canopy or Above-Awning Sign

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.

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

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.

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 canopy will be 30 linear feet and the signage will have an area of 19.59 square feet. The sign will be 12'10" above the pedestrian walkway. The above standards are met.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the installation of a canopy with above-canopy signage at 107 West Broughton Street with the following condition because otherwise the work is visually compatible and meets the standards.

- 1. The sign is not illuminated.**

AND

Deny the variance from standard 9.9.17.g.i.1 that reads, “Signs shall not be illuminated unless specifically indicated below” where above-canopy signs are not specifically indicated. in order to allow the signage to be illuminated, because it does not meet the variance criteria.

MW: CC: APM

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.