



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: **Architecture 101, Sophia Rodriguez**

MPC File No.: **25-004530-COA**

Address: **512 Berrien Street**

PIN: **20003 34002**

Zoning: **D-X**

Staff Reviewer: **Caitlin Chamberlain**

Date: **August 12, 2026**

NATURE OF REQUEST:

The applicant is requesting approval for minor design amendments to a previously approved rehabilitation and alterations work at 512 Berrien Street. The proposed changes include:

- Changing the window from Andersen A-Series picture windows with a custom lite pattern to YKK – YES 45 FI in black with custom aluminum grille
- Modify approved steeple design to a smaller steeple
- Modify rear alter window to be square in shape, as well as downsizing the gable vent

CONTEXT/SURROUNDING AREA:

512 Berrien Street was built circa 1953 and is a non-contributing resource within the National Historic Landmark District and the local Savannah Downtown Historic District. The building, currently Saint Luke's has always functioned as a church and no change in use is being proposed. The church building is a CMU structure surrounded by various commercial and residential buildings, including the Frogtown Apartments and the former Chatham Pipe & Plumbing Supply Company.

PROJECT HISTORY:

The initial project was approved on October 8, 2025, where the scope of work included: Stucco installation over the existing CMU

- Reopening currently infilled windows to restore original fenestration pattern; adding new windows and replacement doors
- Roof replacement
- New steeple installation and alteration of front door surround
- Removal of ADA ramp and installation of new sloped walkway

FINDINGS:

The following standards from the Sec 7.8 - Savannah Downtown Historic District Ordinance apply:

Monumental Buildings. *Monumental buildings shall comply with the following:*

Visual Compatibility Criteria.

The following Design Standards:

Streets and Lanes;

Height;

Setbacks;

Mechanical Equipment and Refuse;

Lighting;

Parking and Paving; and

Fences, Trellises and Walls.

This church is a monumental building, and the design amendments to this project will be evaluated by the applicable standards noted above, which are bolded. A monumental building, as defined per the ordinance is, “An institutional building such as a ***place of worship***, governmental building, school or institution of higher learning with the primary use as education, theater or museum, having special or unique form because of the nature of its use.”

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.*

The added height of the proposed modest steeple inclusion was initially deemed to be visually compatible. The height and design intent remain with the amendment.

Proportion of front façade. *The relationship of the width of a building or structure to the height of its front facade shall be visually compatible to the contributing buildings and structures to which it is visually related.*

The inclusion of the steeple and slight expansion of the front entry area will be in proportion to what is seen on small church buildings of the mid-century and is appropriate. It will not be a disruption to the contributing buildings to which it is visually related.

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.*

The standard is still met with the proposed changes.

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 changed windows are appropriate for a church building and will still maintain the same look as the previously approved including the custom grilles. The biggest change with regard to the openings on the rear elevation where an arched window was initially approved on the rear, and now a square window is being proposed. The window will still express an arched shape within the square. A smaller gable vent above that is also proposed and still remains aligned in a compatible manner in the middle of the elevation.

Rhythm of solids to voids in front façades. *The relationship of solids to voids in the façades visible from the public right-of-way shall be visually compatible with the contributing buildings and structures to which the structure is visually related.*

Even with the proposed window product change, the reinstated windows on the front entry elevation will positively interact with the front door configuration as well. This restoration remains visually compatible, and the standard is met.

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. Proposed changed materials include:

- YKK – YES 45 FI in black with custom aluminum grilles

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.*

The gable roof shape will be maintained, and the downsizing of the steeple will still be proportional to the existing roof shape. The standard is met.

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 inclusion of the steeple will increase the height for that portion of the building only and will stay within the height map because it is remaining one story.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the proposed design amendments to the rehabilitation project located at 512 Berrien Street as requested because the proposed changes are visually compatible and meet 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.