



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: AAA Sign, Bobbie Stephens

MPC File No.: 26-003248-COA

Address: 102 West Bay Street

PIN: 20004 07001

Zoning: D-W

Staff Reviewer: Caitlin Chamberlain

Date: August 12, 2026

NATURE OF REQUEST:

The applicant is requesting approval to install new signage for a hotel rebranding at 102 West Bay Street. The signs have been approved previously for the Bohemian Hotel. There will be a total of two sign changes plus removal of two 'Kessler' signs that will not be replaced, with the work involved detailed below:

- South elevation (Bay Street) - remove and discard existing "Bohemian" internally illuminated wall sign, patch holes, and repair fascia as needed, replace with a new internally illuminated wall sign for "Orielle"
- Northeast corner (River Street) - remove and discard existing "Bohemian" sign panels within existing framing for externally illuminated projecting sign, repaint sign bracket, wall plates and ship
- Remove one 'Kessler' illuminated wall sign from the top left portion of the south elevation and remove one 'Kessler' illuminated wall sign from top right portion of north elevation, including patching holes and repair of fascia as required

CONTEXT/SURROUNDING AREA:

102 West Bay Street is a non-contributing resource within the National Historic Landmark District and the local Savannah Downtown Historic District, specifically on the west end of Upper Factors Walk. It is a newer building that initially opened as the Bohemian Hotel in 2009.

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.

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

The materials of the signs are standard for signage including aluminum, acrylic lettering, painted SW 6879 ‘Grenadine’ which is a pink shade. On the projecting sign, the existing brackets and ship will be painted black, which is not a color change from the existing.

The shapes of the signs, rectangular and square, are typical and compatible within the area. The removal of the two ‘Kessler’ signs eliminates two of the four existing signs, thereby reducing the sign presence on this building.

Historic Special Sign District Boundaries.

Factors Walk Sign District. The Factors Walk Sign District shall include any area located within the Factors Walk Character Area of the Savannah Downtown Historic Overlay District. This area is divided into two (2) sectors:

Sector “A” is that area located between Bay Street and the building line or extension thereof of the structures situated along Factors Walk and above a line equal to the ground elevation of the centerline of Bay Street

Sector “B” is made up of the remainder of the area within this special sign district. In general, Section “B” includes all areas and spaces fronting on River Street and all streets or walkways perpendicular thereto, as well as those levels of Factors Walk below a line equal to the centerline elevation of Bay Street.

The boundaries of the Factors Walk Sign District shall exclude the Plant Riverside Sign District.

The wall sign on the Bay Street (south) elevation is in Sector A and the projecting sign on the River Street elevation is in Sector B.

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).

SECTION 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.

Projecting and wall signs are allowed to be illuminated, but in the Factor's Walk District, they are only permitted as externally illuminated.

Restrictions on Materials.

Within Sector "B" of the Factors Walk Sign District, all ground, projecting and wall signs, except those located on a canopy or awning, shall be constructed from wood or from a material of similar texture or appearance. Lettering shall be restricted to either raised, painted, indented or carved characters or designs on the sign;

The projecting sign is within Sector B and is proposed to be made of aluminum. Per the above standard, it must be either made of wood or from a material similar in texture or appearance. The letters will be raised which does meet the standard. Staff recommends that the applicant select a sign material that meets the standard.

Signs using reflective paint, lettering or graphics; and

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

None of the above prohibited materials are proposed.

Ground, Projecting and Wall Signs.

Factors Walk Sign District.

Projecting Signs and Wall Signs.

Only one (1) 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) projecting or wall sign for each frontage providing public access shall be permitted.

This is a large hotel with multiple frontages and public access points, from both the Bay Street and River Street elevations. Having a wall sign on one elevation, and a projecting sign on another elevation is appropriate and meets the standard in this case.

A projecting or wall sign shall be located upon the signable area of the building.

The standard is met for both.

No projecting or wall sign shall be permitted along a street or public way not providing direct public access to a principal use or activity being promoted or identified, except that a second-story establishment with public access from River Street, via a common area or through another principal use, may erect one (1) projecting or wall sign on the River Street signable area of the building. Provided, a projecting sign shall not extend more than four (4) feet from the building nor exceed nine (9) square feet in area, and a wall sign shall not exceed eight (8) square feet in area.

In this case, the signage is for the principal use of the building as a hotel, where there is public access from both streets.

Wall signs shall not extend to within one (1) foot of the edge of the building, nor shall it project out from the building façade more than 15 inches.

The standard is met.

No portion of a projecting sign shall be less than eight (8) feet above a pedestrian walkway.

The projecting sign placement is a previously approved, existing condition, where only the sign faces will be changed.

Such signs may be externally illuminated in accordance with Sec. 9.9.6 and 9.9.17.g.i.

The standard is met for the projecting sign, as the external illumination fixtures will remain in place from the previous sign.

The standard is not met for the wall sign on the Bay Street elevation. Staff recommends the sign is redesigned to meet the standard or apply for a variance request for a potential approval of the internal illumination.

Maximum Sign Area.

Maximum Sign Area.

The maximum sign area shall not exceed the following:

Factors Walk below Bay Street level.

Projecting Sign: 5 sq. ft.

The sign is pre-existing where the framing remains, but with the rebranding, the sign will fit within the confines of what already exists.

All Other Areas.

Wall Sign: 30 sq. ft.

The proposed wall sign on the Bay Street elevation is 36 square feet. The sign should be scaled down to meet the standard.

The outer edge of a projecting sign shall not extend more than six (6) feet from the building to which it is attached. Provided, however, that for Factors Walk below the Bay Street level, the outer edge of a projecting sign shall not extend more than three (3) feet from the building.

Per the drawings, the standard is met.

The lower edge of a sign shall be minimum of eight (8) feet above any walkway or 10 feet above any driveway or street. Provided, however, that for Factors Walk, below the Bay Street level, the bottom elevation of a sign shall be no less than the clearance provided by the nearest overhead bridges and walkways along lower Factors Walk.

The placement of the projecting sign on the River Street façade is an existing condition which will not be changed.

Except for Factors Walk, below the Bay Street level, wall signs shall be permitted one (1) square foot of sign area per linear foot of building frontage occupied by each ground level principal use up to a maximum of 30 square feet.

While the building frontage on the Bay Street elevation would allow for the 36 square feet of signage, the standard notes that the max is 30 square feet regardless.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Continue the request to install one new internally illuminated wall sign on the Bay Street elevation of the hotel located at 102 West Bay Street, to the September 9, 2026 Historic District Board of Review Meeting to allow the applicant time to address the following:

- 1. Change the internal illumination to external illumination to meet the ordinance or apply for a variance to potentially maintain the internal illumination.**
- 2. Scale down the sign to meet the 30 square foot maximum.**

AND

Approve the request to remove the ‘Kessler’ signs and associated repairs, and replacement of the externally illuminated projecting sign on the River Street elevation with the following condition to be reviewed and approved by staff for the final design, because it is otherwise visually compatible and meets the standards:

- 1. Select an approved material for the sign to either be wood or a material similar in texture or appearance to wood.**

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.