



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: **Array Design, Shauna Kucera**

MPC File No.: **25-005645-COA**

Address: **412-416 East Gwinnett Street**

PIN: **20044 08016**

Zoning: **D-R**

Staff Reviewer: **Caitlin Chamberlain**

Date: **January 14, 2026**

NATURE OF REQUEST:

The applicant is requesting approval to install 18 thin, low-profile solar panels to the roof of the building located at 412-416 East Gwinnett Street. The scope of the project also includes a Special Exception request.

CONTEXT/SURROUNDING AREA:

412-416 East Gwinnett Street was constructed in 1899 and is a contributing resource within the National Historic Landmark District and the local Savannah Downtown Historic District. It is one of several contributing resources along this side of the street but also faces the current Goodwill Vault store across the street.

PROJECT HISTORY:

This project was first presented to the Historic District Board of Review at the December 10, 2025, meeting. At that time, staff noted that a Special Exception would need to be requested for full approval of the proposed 24 solar panels, but the applicant still wanted to get the Board's feedback on the initial plans. The Board Decision was as follows:

"The Savannah Historic District Board of Review does hereby continue the request to install 24 roof-mounted solar panels on the building located at 412-416 East Gwinnett Street to the January 14, 2026, Historic District Board of Review Meeting to address how many panels require the Special Exception and the visibility from the street."

Since that time, the applicant has scaled down the project to include 18 instead of 24 solar panels, which removed all of the ones that could be seen from the front gables of the house. This will greatly reduce the visibility. The Special Exception request is also included in the report to account for the partial visibility of three (3) of these panels from the vantage point of Price

Street. The image below illustrates the potential for these few panels to be seen. This minor amount will not have a significant impact on the historic character of the building.



FINDINGS:

The following standards from the Sec 3.12 Special Exceptions apply:

Special Exceptions.

Review by Savannah Downtown Historic District Board of Review. *Special Exceptions (as listed below) for the Savannah Downtown Historic Overlay District shall be considered by the Savannah Downtown Historic Board of Review.*

Applicable Special Exceptions.

To adjust Preservation and Design Standards for local historic districts as follows:

Secs. 7.8.10, 7.9.10, and 7.11.10 Design Standards.

The applicant is requesting a Special Exception approval for the standard that reads:

“Alternative energy source devices may be permitted on new construction and non-contributing resources. Such devices may be permitted on contributing resources provided they are not visible from a street fronting elevation and do not damage or obscure any character-defining features” §7.8.10.p

To allow for the ability to install solar panels on a contributing building that may be visible from a street-fronting elevation, as a small portion of the panels may be partially visible from Price Street.

Review Criteria for Special Exceptions. *When reviewing a special exception request, a finding shall be made by the Savannah Downtown Historic District Board of Review for each of the criteria listed below.*

Whether the use for which the special exception is being considered would be located, operated and maintained in a manner in conformance with the goals, policies, and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan and the provisions of this Ordinance.

The installation of solar panels is in conformance with the [100% Savannah](#) initiative which has a goal that states that all electricity consumed in the City of Savannah is generated from safe, clean, renewable energy by 2035. This includes residential solar panels. This also aligns with the Comprehensive Plan, Chapter 9: Quality of Life.

Whether the special exception would not be detrimental to the public interest, health, safety, welfare, function, and appearance of the adjacent uses or general vicinity.

The above standard is met. The thin, low-profile panels will be mostly obstructed from view, but they are confined to this property alone and located in a way to avoid negatively impacting other adjacent uses or general vicinity.

Additional Conditions, Restrictions and Safeguards. The Savannah Downtown Historic District Board of Review may include conditions, restrictions or limitations as part of the approval in order to protect public health, safety, and welfare. When a special exception is approved with conditions, those conditions shall run with the land and shall be binding on the original applicant as well as any successor.

Staff does not have any additional conditions.

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.

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.

Secretary of the Interior's Standards 4– Historic Changes. Most properties change over time; those changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.

Secretary of the Interior's Standards 5– Distinctive Features. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property shall be preserved.

The standards are met. Most of the panels will not be visible and will not significantly diminish the historic character of the house. They are low-profile and mounted to the roof. The roof

configuration will be maintained. Solar panels are not conjectural features and will not cause a false sense of history because they are clearly of the present time. The panels could be removed without compromising the integrity of the house.

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 panels are black and glass. They are standard solar panels with a low profile intending to be minimally visible.

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 roof shape will remain as it currently is.

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.

Roofs, Contributing Resources.

Roofs, Configuration.

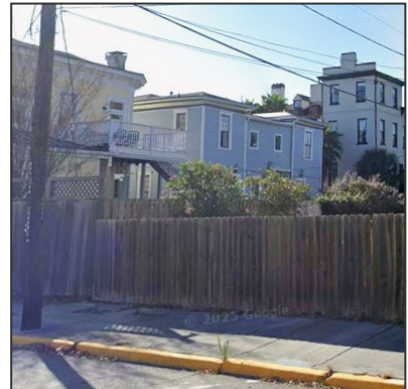
Original roof configuration shall be maintained.

The installation of the panels will maintain the original roof configuration.

Mechanical Equipment and Refuse. *Mechanical equipment and refuse shall comply with Sec. 9.5.3, Screening of Service Areas, except as provided below.*

Alternative energy source devices may be permitted on new construction and non-contributing resources. Such devices may be permitted on contributing resources provided they are not visible from a street fronting elevation and do not damage or obscure any character-defining features.

Images below show how from the front elevation, these will not be seen. The original proposal was for 24 panels, some of which were mounted along the front gable of the roof. With the revised proposal of 18 panels, this omits the visibility of the street fronting elevation on Gwinnett Street. As seen on the plans, the panels now begin behind and past the front chimneys. The rear of the house, which can be seen from Price Street may have some visibility with approximately three (3) solar panels, but their visibility will not significantly diminish the historic character of the house.



STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the request to install 18 roof-mounted solar panels on the building located at 412-416 East Gwinnett Street as requested because the work is visually compatible and meets the standards.

AND

Approve the Special Exception request from the standard that reads

“Alternative energy source devices may be permitted on new construction and non-contributing resources. Such devices may be permitted on contributing resources provided they are not visible from a street fronting elevation and do not damage or obscure any character-defining features” §7.8.10.p

to allow for a minor degree of visibility of approximately three (3) solar panels, because the Special Exception criteria are met.

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.