



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: **Fellipe Bueno, Sunlight Solar**

MPC File No.: **26-001302-COA**

Address: **504 East Jones**

PIN: **20014 19020**

Zoning: **D-R**

Staff Reviewer: **Alexander Merced**

Date: **June 10, 2026**

NATURE OF REQUEST:

The applicant would like to install 14 solar panels on the rear, lane-facing slope of the roof of 504 East Jones Street. This project was continued from the May 13, 2026 HDBR meeting.

Since there will be a slight degree of visibility, the applicant is also requesting a Special Exception.

CONTEXT/SURROUNDING AREA:

The building was constructed in 1861 and is a contributing resource within the National Historic Landmark District and the local Savannah Downtown Historic District. It sits in between a contributing house to the West and the non-contributing Macedonia Baptist Church to the East, with the rest of the block mostly composed of contributing resources.

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. 7.8.8, 7.9.8, and 7.11.8 Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Rehabilitation.

Secs. 7.8.10, 7.9.10, and 7.11.10 Design Standards.

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.

One of the goals of the Comprehensive Plan is to expand clean and renewable energy throughout Chatham County, with specific focus on streamlining permitting for rooftop solar installations. The criterion is met.

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 proposed solar panels will not be in view from the street and will have no negative impacts on the public or any surrounding structures. The criterion is met.

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.

Time Limitations for Approved Special Conditions. Approval of a special exception pursuant to the provisions of this Ordinance shall become null and void unless the following is completed in the time period specified:

For any special exception that would not require a building permit, the special exception shall be acted upon within one (1) year from when the special exception was granted; or

For any special exception that would require a building permit, the related building permit shall have been issued and have remained continuously valid thereafter within two (2) years from the date the special exception was granted.

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.*

There will be no alterations or removal of anything from the building and the historic character will remain unchanged. 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.*

The solar panels will not damage any historic materials on the building. 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 solar panels can always be removed in the future. The standard is met.

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.*

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 solar panels will lay on the rear slope of the roof and extend only 1.2 inches from the surface. They will not be visible from the street and will maintain visual compatibility with surrounding contributing buildings.

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.

Skylights, roof decks, pergolas and roof vents shall be permitted only on the roof plane opposite the street, or when screened from public view and shall not damage or obscure character-defining features.

The roof configuration will remain unchanged, and the panels will be on the plane opposite the street. The above standards are met.

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

Electrical vaults, meter boxes, communications devices, and similar equipment shall be located on the secondary and/or rear façades and shall be minimally visible from view.

The battery and control device will be located on the existing meter box on the secondary façade.

Roof mounted equipment and HVAC units shall be screened from view from the public right-of-way.

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.

The panels will not be visible from a street fronting elevation and will not damage or obscure any character-defining features. The standard is met.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the special exception for the installation of 14 solar panels on the roof of 504 East Jones Street as requested because it meets the criteria for special exceptions and is otherwise visually compatible and meets the standards.

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.