



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: Signs of the South
MPC File No.: 26-000723-COA
Address: 31 West Congress Street
PIN: 20004 37009
Zoning: D-CBD
Staff Reviewer: Alexander Merced
Date: March 11, 2026

NATURE OF REQUEST:

The applicant would like to change the exterior paint color, reupholster and change the color of the three awnings, and install signage, including a non-illuminated wall sign, translucent window stripes, and an entry door logo.

CONTEXT/SURROUNDING AREA:

The building was constructed in 1851 and is a contributing resource within the National Historic Landmark District and the local Savannah Downtown Historic District. The address is part of a three-story commercial building at the corner of Congress and Whitaker with storefronts that wrap around the ground floor on both streets. It sits across Congress from the parking lot and drive-thru ATM of a contributing bank building, and next door to a non-contributing commercial building.

FINDINGS:

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.

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The colors and signage of this storefront and building have changed multiple times so the proposed changes will not affect the historic features or character of 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 sign and awnings can all be removed and the color can be changed. 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.*

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 height and width of the façade will remain unchanged. 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.*

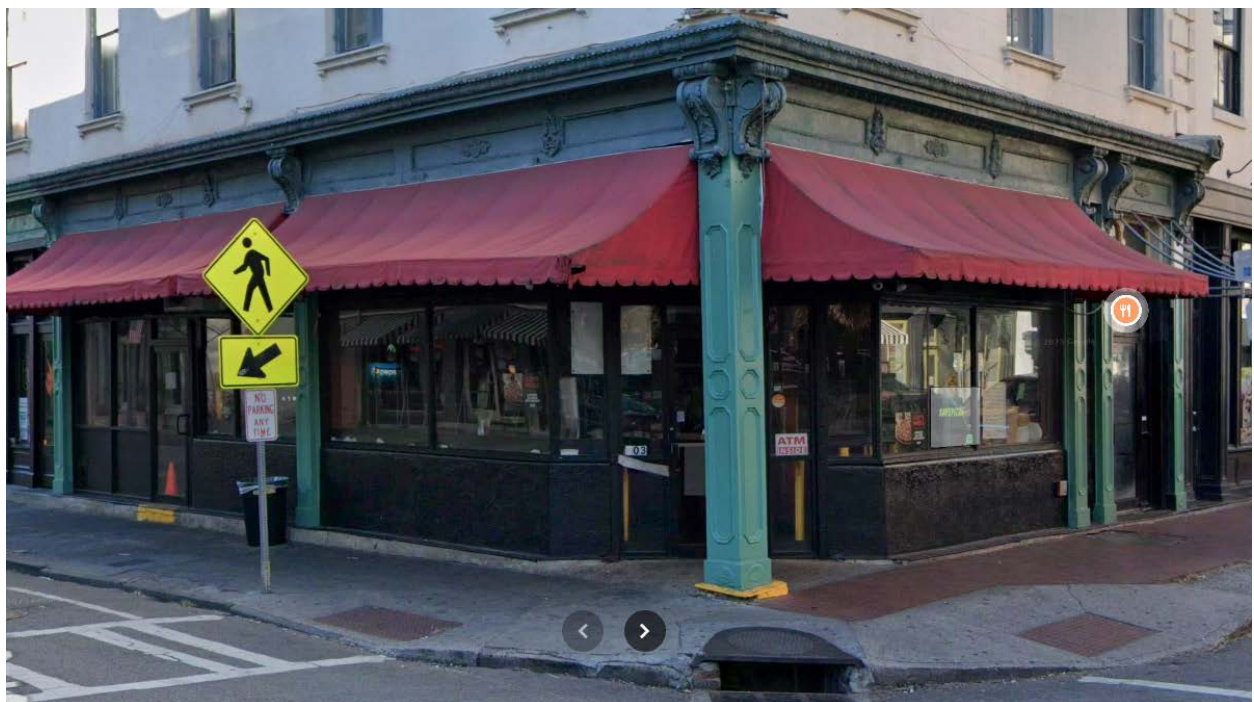
The awning style will remain unchanged and will still match surrounding awnings, and a similar pastel-style colors have been used in many storefronts in the area over the years, including multiple current storefronts within that ward and adjacent wards. The standard is met.



1. 126 Broughton in adjacent ward



2. 36 W Broughton in the same ward



3. 103 W Congress at the same intersection

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

There are multiple wall signs of similar style and size within the ward and adjacent wards, including the immediately adjacent storefront of Engel & Völkers. The standard is met.



4. Adjacent storefront with similar style sign



5. 37 Whitaker Street around the block with similar style sign

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.

Exterior walls, Alterations to contributing resources.

Exterior Walls, Finishes and Treatments.

Color changes to contributing resources shall be historically appropriate.

As noted earlier, similar pastel-style colors have been used in many storefronts in the area over the years. The standard is met.



6. Broughton Street circa 1950's-60's with a similar color store front on the right

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 awnings have a vertical clearance of 8 feet above the sidewalk. The criterion 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.

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

Awnings shall not connect two (2) facades.

All above criteria are met.

Awnings, Canopies, and Shade Structures, Materials.

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

The awnings will be made of outdoor acrylic fiber. The standard is met.

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

The existing supports are being retained. The standard is met

The following standards from the Sec. 9.9.17 - Special Sign Districts apply:

Historic Special Sign District Boundaries.

Savannah Downtown Historic Sign District. *The Savannah Downtown Historic Sign District shall include any area location within the Savannah Downtown Historic Overlay District, with the exception of City Market, Broughton Street, Factors Walk, and Plant Riverside Sign Districts.*

Special Sign Standards for the Savannah Downtown Historic, City Market, Broughton Street, Factors Walk and Neighborhood Sign Districts.

Restrictions on Materials.

Signs using reflective paint, lettering, or graphics

The sign does not use reflective paint, lettering, or graphics. The standard is met.

Window Signs.

This sign shall be allowed in addition to a permitted ground, projecting, or wall sign.

Such signs may be attached, erected, etched or painted on a window of a building or structure.

The sum of such signs shall not exceed 10% of the window area of each façade.

Each window sign will be etched on, and each covers less than 10% of its given window, with the total window area coverage coming out to 7.6%. All above standards are met.

Ground, Projecting and Wall Signs.

Savannah Downtown Historic and City Market Sign Districts.

Ground, Projecting and Wall Signs. Only one (1) ground, 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) wall or projecting sign for each frontage providing public access shall be permitted.

There will be one (1) wall sign on the façade. The standard is met.

The aggregate sign area shall not exceed a size of more than one (1) square foot of sign area per linear foot of lot frontage along a given street or shall meet the following size requirements, whichever is the most restrictive:

D-CBD Zoning District:

40 sq. ft.: Wall sign (max)

The linear lot frontage of the storefront is 30 feet, and the wall sign will be 27.88 square feet. The standard is met.

Wall and projecting signs shall be erected only on the signable area of the structure and shall not project over the roofline or parapet wall elevation of the structure.

Wall signs shall be mounted flat to a wall of the façade of the building.

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

All of the above standards are met.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the work proposed for 31 West Congress Street as requested because it is 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.