SAVANNAH HISTORIC DISTRICT

BOARD OF REVIEW

REQUEST FOR CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS

Petitioner:	**Sign D'Sign, Alicia Benbennick**
MPC File No.:	**26-005259-COA**
Address:	**225 East President Street**
PIN:	**20015 01003**
Zoning:	**D-CBD**
Staff Reviewer:	**Caitlin Chamberlain**
Date:	**November 10, 2026**

NATURE OF REQUEST:

The applicant is requesting approval to install signage for two businesses within the new annex for the Sabal House Hotel at 225 East President Street, the former Presidents' Quarters Inn. The signs are for the Sabal House and the Oak Steakhouse within the building. There are multiple signs proposed for both and include:

- One (1) internally illuminated wall mounted sign for the Sabal House above the entrance on the East President Street elevation
- One (1) externally illuminated wall sign for the Oak Steakhouse above the entrance on Abercorn Street
- One (1) double-sided internally illuminated projecting sign at the main entrance on East President Street, for the Oak Steakhouse
- Three (3) double-sided internally illuminated projecting signs for the Sabal House to be located at:
    - The main entrance on the East President Street elevation
    - At the corner of the East President and Abercorn Street elevations
    - At the corner of the Abercorn Street and East York Street elevation

CONTEXT/SURROUNDING AREA:

The new hotel annex building at 225 East President Street is a non-contributing building, still under construction, within the National Historic Landmark District and the local Savannah Downtown Historic District. The sign installations will not be included on the existing historic building. The new structure faces Oglethorpe Square and is clearly a separate, differentiated structure from the historic structure on the same lot. This is part of the hotel expansion and rebranding as the Sabal House.

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.*

In terms of the materials, textures, and colors of the signs the standard is met. The signs are made of materials typical of modern-day signage and do not cause an issue with compatibility with the surrounding historic buildings.

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

The wall signs are visually compatible. The projecting signs are visually compatible in the sense that their scale and design are minimal and appropriate in this historic area, but the volume of the projecting signs is not. Staff recommends minimizing the amount of projecting signs for visual compatibility purposes as well as adherence to the Special Sign Districts standards which will be outlined below.

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

> ***Special Sign Districts.*** *In Addition to the requirements of Sec. 9.9.1 through 9.9.13, signs in the following special sign districts shall comply with the provisions of this Section, provided that where such provisions are in conflict with any requirements of Sec. 9.9.1 through 9.9.13, the requirements of this section shall prevail.*
>
> ***Historic Special Sign District Boundaries.***
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> > ***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.***
>
> > ***Sign Illumination.***
> >
> > *Signs shall not be illuminated unless specifically indicated below.*

Both wall and projecting signs are permitted to be illuminated.

Where illumination is permitted, reverse silhouette or "cut-out" letters are encouraged to reduce glare where back lighting is applied.

For the illuminated wall sign, reverse silhouette halo-lit letters are proposed and for the externally illuminated wall sign, flat letters are proposed. Both of these letter types will reduce glare.

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.

For the wall signs, the standard is met. Although there are entrances to the hotel and restaurant from Abercorn and East President Streets, there are more signs than what the ordinance allows for. One frontage cannot have a wall and projecting sign for the same business.

The Abercorn Street elevation should omit one of the two Sabal House projecting signs in order to meet this. It may be that the projecting sign closest to York Street remains and the one closer to President Street is omitted to allow for maximum visibility without exceeding the ordinance.

For the East President Street elevation, the Sabal House wall sign and the Oak Steakhouse projecting sign meet the standard, but the Sabal House projecting sign should be omitted, per the standard.

No portion of a sign shall be erected within two (2) feet of a curb line.

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-C, D-CBD, D-X, I-L, I-LT Zoning Districts:

40 sq. ft.: Wall sign (max)

The Sabal House wall sign is 8.25 square feet, and the Oak Steakhouse wall sign is 5.032 square feet. The standard is met for these signs.

30 sq. ft.: Ground or Projecting Sign (max)

Each projecting sign is 7.5 square feet.

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.

The standard is met.

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

The standard is met.

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

Per the drawings, the projecting signs would be 10 feet above the walkways.

> *Ground, projecting and wall signs in D-C, D-CBD, D-X, I-L, and I-LT districts may be illuminated in accordance with Sec. 9.9.6 and 9.9.17.g.i.*

9.9.6 Sign Illumination

> *Sign illumination, where permitted, shall be designed and installed so that it does not cast light directly from any source of illumination onto any street or adjacent property.*

Per the plans, the standard is met.

> *Enclosed lamp, neon or exposed fluorescent lighting shall not be permitted within any Residential district or across the street from any residential use.*

The hotel is not in a residential district, but the illuminated signs are not across the street from residential uses along Abercorn and East President Streets, where the proposed signs would be installed.

> *External illumination devices shall be a steady stationary light source, shielded and directed solely at the sign.*

The Oak Steakhouse wall sign is externally illuminated with a shaded wall sconce light facing towards the sign. This standard is met.

a. Internally illuminated signs shall be designed with:

i. Individual illuminated letters, i.e., channel letters, including illumination with exposed neon lighting; or

ii. An opaque background.

The internally illuminated Sabal House wall sign will have individually illuminated reverse, halo-lit channel letters and the projecting signs for the Sabal House and Oak Steakhouse have an opaque background.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the request to install new illuminated signage on the East President Street and Abercorn Street elevations of the new hotel building at 225 East President Street with the following conditions because the work is otherwise visually compatible and meets the standards:

1. **Omit the Sabal House projecting sign from the East President Street elevation.**
2. **Omit one of the two Sabal House projecting signs from the Abercorn Street elevation.**

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.