Savannah Historic District Board of Review

Arthur A. Mendonsa Hearing Room
September 9, 2026
1:00 P.M.
MINUTES

September 9, 2026 HISTORIC District Board of Review Meeting

A Pre-Meeting was held at 12:00 PM in the Jerry Surrency Conference Room, 112 East State Street. Items on the Agenda were presented by Staff, as time permitted, and the Board asked questions. No testimony was received, and no votes were taken.

Members Present: Thomas L. Thomson, Chair
Melissa Rowan, Vice Chair
Shedrick Coleman
Karen Guinn
Mariel Hamer
Robert Helms
Michael Higgins
Sabrina Nagel
Sara Woodfield

Members Absent: None

MPC Staff Present: Caitlin Chamberlain, Director of Historic Preservation
Jodie Brown, Principal Planner
Alexander Merced. Planner
Rohan Urs, Planner
Bri Morgan, Administrative Assistant II
Hind Patel, Information Technology

I. CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOME

II. SIGN POSTING

III. CONSENT AGENDA

1. Petition of Whitfield Signs, Inc., Josie Austin |26-004194-COA | 601 E River Street | Illuminated Sign

Motion

The Savannah Historic District Board of Review does hereby approve the installation of one illuminated sign on the north facade at 601 East River Street as submitted because the work is visually compatible and meets the standards.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Karen Guinn

Second: Melissa H. Rowan

Karen Guinn	- Aye
Michael Higgins	- Aye
Melissa H. Rowan	- Aye
Thomas L. Thomson	- Abstain
Sabrina Nagel	- Aye
Sara Woodfield	- Aye
Shedrick Coleman	- Aye
Mariel Hamer	- Aye
Robert Helms	- Aye

2. Petition of Superior Fence and Rail, Cat Simmons | 26-003497-COA | 446 Price Street | Fence

Motion

The Savannah Historic District Board of Review does hereby approve the request to replace the rear yard fence with a 6 foot wood fence at 446 Price Street, as submitted, because the work is visually compatible and meets the standards.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Karen Guinn

Second: Melissa H. Rowan

Karen Guinn	- Aye
Michael Higgins	- Aye
Melissa H. Rowan	- Aye
Thomas L. Thomson	- Abstain
Sabrina Nagel	- Aye
Sara Woodfield	- Aye
Shedrick Coleman	- Aye
Mariel Hamer	- Aye
Robert Helms	- Aye

3. Petition of Hansen Architects P.C., Patrick Phelps |26-004198-COA | 14 W Broughton Street | Illuminated Sign

Motion

Approve the illuminated wall sign at 14 West Broughton Street, as requested for the proposal is visually compatible and meets the standards.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Karen Guinn

Second: Melissa H. Rowan

Karen Guinn	- Aye
Michael Higgins	- Aye
Melissa H. Rowan	- Aye
Thomas L. Thomson	- Abstain
Sabrina Nagel	- Aye
Sara Woodfield	- Aye
Shedrick Coleman	- Aye
Mariel Hamer	- Aye
Robert Helms	- Aye

4. Petition of ShopMOSS, LLC, Brian Morris | 26-004189-COA | 38 Barnard Street | Rehabilitation, Alterations & Window Signs

Motion

The Savannah Historic District Board of Review does hereby approve the proposed rehabilitation and alterations to the business located at 38 Barnard Street as requested because the work is visually compatible and meets the standards.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Karen Guinn

Second: Melissa H. Rowan

Karen Guinn	- Aye
Michael Higgins	- Aye
Melissa H. Rowan	- Aye
Thomas L. Thomson	- Abstain
Sabrina Nagel	- Aye
Sara Woodfield	- Aye
Shedrick Coleman	- Aye
Mariel Hamer	- Aye
Robert Helms	- Aye

IV. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

5. Adopt the September 9, 2026 HDBR Agenda as presented.

Motion

The Historic District Board of Review motioned to approve the September 9, 2026 HDBR meeting agenda as presented,

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Karen Guinn

Second: Melissa H. Rowan

Karen Guinn	- Aye

Michael Higgins	- Aye
Melissa H. Rowan	- Aye
Thomas L. Thomson	- Abstain
Sabrina Nagel	- Aye
Sara Woodfield	- Aye
Shedrick Coleman	- Aye
Mariel Hamer	- Aye
Robert Helms	- Aye

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

6. Approve the August 12, 2026 HDBR Meeting Minutes as presented.

Motion

The Historic District Board of Review motioned to approve the August 12, 2026 HDBR meeting minutes as presented.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Karen Guinn

Second: Melissa H. Rowan

Karen Guinn	- Aye
Michael Higgins	- Aye
Melissa H. Rowan	- Aye
Thomas L. Thomson	- Abstain
Sabrina Nagel	- Aye
Sara Woodfield	- Aye
Shedrick Coleman	- Aye
Mariel Hamer	- Aye
Robert Helms	- Aye

VI. ITEM(S) REQUESTED TO BE REMOVED FROM THE FINAL AGENDA

VII. CONTINUED AGENDA

7. Petition of Westbay LLC, Deborah Thoben Member | 26-004197-COA | 206 West Bay Street | Gates

Motion

Continue

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Karen Guinn

Second: Melissa H. Rowan

Karen Guinn	- Aye
Michael Higgins	- Aye

Melissa H. Rowan	- Aye
Thomas L. Thomson	- Abstain
Sabrina Nagel	- Aye
Sara Woodfield	- Aye
Shedrick Coleman	- Aye
Mariel Hamer	- Aye
Robert Helms	- Aye

8. Petition of Doug Bean Signs | 26-004190-COA | 606 Turner Boulevard | Above Canopy Sign

Motion

Continue

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Karen Guinn

Second: Melissa H. Rowan

Karen Guinn	- Aye
Michael Higgins	- Aye
Melissa H. Rowan	- Aye
Thomas L. Thomson	- Abstain
Sabrina Nagel	- Aye
Sara Woodfield	- Aye
Shedrick Coleman	- Aye
Mariel Hamer	- Aye
Robert Helms	- Aye

VIII. REQUEST FOR EXTENSION

IX. REGULAR AGENDA

9. Petition of First Union Missionary Church | 26-004192-COA | 536 Berrien Street | Non-Contributing Demolition

Alexander Merced presented the applicant's to demolish an abandoned non-contributing structure located at 536 Berrien Street.

The building was constructed sometime between 1938-1951 and is a non-contributing resource within the local Savannah Downtown Historic District but lies outside of the National Landmark Historic District, west of MLK Boulevard. It is surrounded mostly by parking lots, vacant lots, and non-contributing structures, although there are two contributing buildings within a two-block radius. Historic aerial photographs show that the plot of land was empty in 1938, and the concrete block building was there by the next available photo taken in 1951. According to the 1955 Sanborn Map, the building was used as a motor station, potentially having to do with freight. Based off Google Street View images, the building appears to have been abandoned since at least 2007 and the roof has partially collapsed.

Staff recommended to approve the demolition of the non-contributing structure at 536

Berrien Street with the following conditions because it otherwise meets the criteria for non-contributing demolition and was not found to have exceptional importance:

1. Determine whether the building can be deconstructed rather than traditional demolition, and the materials salvaged for reuse where possible.
2. Document the building as per the City of Savannah's Policy for Documenting Buildings Prior to Demolition.

PETITIONER COMMENTS:
Stephanie Robinson, petitioner, stated Building is unsafe and subject to constant vagrancy, thus the need of the request.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:
There were no public comments.

BOARD DISCUSSION:
The Board supported Staff recommendation.

Motion

The Savannah Historic District Board of Review does hereby approve the demolition of the non-contributing structure at 536 Berrien Street with the following conditions because it otherwise meets the criteria for non-contributing demolition and was not found to have exceptional importance:

Determine whether the building can be deconstructed rather than traditional demolition, and the materials salvaged for reuse where possible.
Document the building as per the City of Savannah’s Policy for Documenting Buildings Prior to Demolition.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Shedrick Coleman

Second: Melissa H. Rowan

Karen Guinn	- Aye
Michael Higgins	- Aye
Melissa H. Rowan	- Aye
Thomas L. Thomson	- Abstain
Sabrina Nagel	- Aye
Sara Woodfield	- Aye
Shedrick Coleman	- Aye
Mariel Hamer	- Aye
Robert Helms	- Aye

10. Petition of Luis Posada, Jr. | 26-004119-COA | 234 Price Street | Restore Ghost Sign

Jodie Brown presented the applicant's request of approval to restore the existing Uneeda Biscuit ghost sign located on the north side of the building.

Ghost signs are old, hand-painted advertising images on the exterior walls of buildings that have survived for decades. The signs were frequently painted by artists referred to as “wall dogs” who were known to work from scaled drawings. Some would utilize perforated paper outlines for the buildings and use “pounce bags” filled with chalk or powdered charcoal to create a series of dots on the wall surface. The dots would then be connected with paint to create the advertisement. It was not uncommon for the surface to be covered with paint that included linseed oil, varnish and a little bit of gasoline. Given the age of the ghost sign, the paint most likely included lead which is one of the reasons that they have lasted so long. Old paints were also less vibrant, and the palette was limited. Modern paints tend to peel rather than slowly fading away.

Preservationists tend to be split on how to treat ghost signs. There are those that believe the sign should be restored with modern-day paints and those that think the sign should be documented and left alone. Some also believe that for the sign to be authentic, it should only be repaired/repainted by the original artist.

This project was recently heard by the Historic Sites and Monuments Commission at their September 3, 2026, meeting.

Located at the southeast corner of Perry and Price Street, the house was constructed in the Crawford Ward. Designed as a townhouse in the Greek Revival style, the house was built in 1855. The subject house is an end unit. It is 2-stories tall with a brick exterior in a running bond pattern. The cornice features a dentil molding below the parapet. The front façade has symmetrically placed fenestration with 8/8 double hung windows on the left and a 6/6 double hung window on the right above the single-entry door with a transom. The windows feature a stone header and sills while the door replicates the look with a stone header and entry step. The north façade has no windows and a ghost sign for Uneeda Biscuit. The rear originally had a one story shed roof portion that was partially covered with another shed addition sheathed with T1-11 siding.

The subject building is listed as a contributing resource within the National Historic Landmark District and the local Savannah Downtown Historic District.

Staff recommended to CONTINUE the request until the November 10, 2026, Historic District Board of Review Meeting in order to allow the applicant time to address the FOLLOWING CONDITIONS to restore the Uneeda Biscuit ghost sign on the north side of 234 Price Street, and for staff to subsequently review the new information.

1. Obtain the services of an art conservator to assess the proper process, colors, and materials for restoration.
2. Provide spec sheets for the proposed paint, consolidator and other cleaning materials that are appropriate for historic painted brick.
3. Indicate where the brick will be repointed and the proposed tooling.

Brown informed the Board that the newest proposal was just submitted the day before the meeting and she did not have time to review it.

Higgins expressed concerns regarding the condition of the building, restoration, and conservation. **Brown** stated the mortar is old, may need to be repointed, though that process was not indicated in the request.

Brown stressed this decision would set a precedent: how to treat ghost signs.

PETITIONER COMMENTS:

Lou Posada, stated he does not want a new sign, wants to maintain the ghost aesthetic. Paint maybe 20% of it. "Biscuit" is dominate and wants to maintain that and does not want to cover the later images. He highlighted the proposed paint contents. Not sure if reversible, as he is an architect, not a painter. He expressed his belief that the Board is asking burdensome requests.

Guinn stated Board and Staff did not have time to review presentation submitted the day before the hearing.

David Laughton, muralist, stated it will be a reproduction of age throughout the entire image.

PUBLIC COMMENT:
Courtney Bonney, contractor of the project, stated the brick repointing will be supervised. All information has been provided to Staff.

Paul Cobet, Downtown Neighborhood Association, stated they are in favor of the proposal.

Kaylee Johnson, Historic Savannah Foundation, believed the proposal to be appropriate.

BOARD DISCUSSION:
Some members of the Board thought the project was good and exciting and commended the petitioner. Recommended testing the paint material first. While some recommended moving the petition to Staff level as the petitioner is looking to stabilize and not repaint, some Board members expressed they would like to see a recommendation of an art conservator not affiliated with the project. Testing has to occur regardless.

Motion

BOARD DECISION: APPROVE the request to partially restore the north façade mural on the property at 234 Price Street with the FOLLOWING CONDITION because the work is visually compatible and consistent with the standards.
1.Provide staff with a detailed conservation treatment plan and mock up, before moving forward, which should include test panels and specification sheets for paint, consolidator and other cleaning materials appropriate for historic painted brick.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Karen Guinn

Second: Melissa H. Rowan

Karen Guinn	- Aye
Michael Higgins	- Nay
Melissa H. Rowan	- Aye
Thomas L. Thomson	- Abstain
Sabrina Nagel	- Aye
Sara Woodfield	- Aye
Shedrick Coleman	- Aye
Mariel Hamer	- Aye

Robert Helms	- Aye

11. Petition of Studio H Architects, Julie Miller | 26-002967-COA | 114 West Bay Street | Rehabilitation & Alterations

Caitlin Chamberlain presented the applicant's request of approval for rehabilitation & alterations on the building located at114 West Bay Street, the building that houses the expansion area of the Cotton Sail Hotel. The scope of work is focused on the expansion area, in the building that had most recently been Finnegan's Package Shop but has sat vacant for several years.

Bay Street Side:

-Existing metal coping to be removed and replaced with new prefinished metal coping to match existing adjacent coping
-Existing stucco to be repaired and refinished
-Installation of windows in boarded up openings, including replacing deteriorated window trim- windows based on configuration seen in historic photos
-Existing storefront to be removed and replaced with new wood storefronts to match the existing hotel storefront
-Preserve existing columns, repaint including gold trim and accents

River Street Side:

-Reinstalling windows in areas where there are none
-Replacing existing metal coping
-Removal of the existing enclosed second-floor balcony, and replacing with a new open-air, covered balcony
-Stucco restoration and repainting

The recent project history focused on this current proposal is as follows:

June 10, 2026: The Board denied the re-application of this expired project which also included a new element of removing the second-floor balcony on the River Street side and replacing with a new balcony [26-002480-COA]. This was applied for as an amendment. The Board had concerns that this was a procedural error and that it should be reapplied for as a new application. The new application for rehabilitation and alterations was presented at the July 8, 2026, HDBR meeting.

July 8, 2026: A new application was submitted and presented. There were more details included about the work but Board members still had some questions they would have liked to ask the petitioners, who were not present. Thus, the decision was to continue to the August 12, 2026 Meeting. MPC staff received information addressing concerns of the Board members past the deadline for August but in time for the September meeting.

Concerns included the representation of an upper enclosed rooftop deck area shown on the renderings and inconsistencies with doors and windows between the renderings and elevations. The applicant has provided clarification that at this time there is no request for the rooftop deck area, and that the elevation drawings are the correct version of the architectural details.
The historic building was constructed in 1852 and is a contributing resource within the National Historic Landmark District and the local Savannah Downtown Historic District. It is part of the row comprised of 112-130 West Bay Street. The upper-level windows have been

covered and the storefront doors and windows have changed, though the columns and decorative work remain intact. The applicant intends to preserve these.

Staff reommended to approve the proposed rehabilitation and alterations for the property located at 114 West Bay Street as requested because the work is visually compatible and meets the standards.

PETITIONER COMMENTS:
Julie Miller, petitioner, addressed comments from the Board. Stated they will use materials as historically accurate as possible.

Guinn stated there are discrepancies with drawings and plans. She asked about windows: configurations, profiles. **Miller** responded the drawings were done four years ago. They will match exactly what was there.

PUBLIC COMMENT:
Andrew Jones, citizen, presented his opinions as to how the structure should be visually rehabilitated. He questioned the proposed windows.

BOARD COMMENTS:
The Board expressed concern with lighting on the Bay Street side. Would like more information on materials of balcony. The window light pattern should be addressed, as looks a bit modern. Concern was expressed that the window plan would not look like the final window type on the drawings. There are an array of window types yet streets Bay and River types are also different; needs to be cohesive. There were, however, members that believed there were no issues in the window types; changing windows appropriate to elevation happens all the time. The balcony needs more attention, should not be downplayed.

Motion

The Savannah Historic District Board of Review does hereby continue the petition for the proposed rehabilitation and alterations at 114 West Bay Street to the October 14, 2026, Historic District Board of Review meeting to allow the applicant time to address the following:
1.Provide clarity on window materials and lite patterns.
2.Provide clarification on materials and design for the balcony, more specifically, the wall.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Sabrina Nagel

Second: Shedrick Coleman

Karen Guinn	- Aye
Michael Higgins	- Aye
Melissa H. Rowan	- Aye
Thomas L. Thomson	- Abstain
Sabrina Nagel	- Aye
Sara Woodfield	- Aye
Shedrick Coleman	- Aye

Mariel Hamer	- Aye
Robert Helms	- Aye

12. Petition of Eli Lurie | 24-006550-COA | 11 West Gordon Street | Design Amendment

****Ms. Rowan recused herself from this petition.*

Caitlin Chamberlain presented the applicant's request of approval for an amendment to the previously approved New Construction, Accessory Building, Parts I & II from April 9, 2025, to allow for the removal of a non-historic site wall and moving the accessory structure slightly from the property line.
Per the applicant:
"During the course of the work, we discovered that the existing western site wall does not align with the property line, but is instead located approximately 1'2" inside the property line. We are proposing to remove the existing site wall and construct the new carriage house along the same line, maintaining the existing 1'2" setback from the property line."
The applicant included a stamped survey from a GA licensed land surveyor showing this detail where the site wall is inside the property line. 11 West Gordon Street was constructed in 1858 and is a three-story with raised basement masonry (stucco) free-standing building on the south side of West Gordon Street between Bull Street and Whitaker Street on Monterey Square. It is a contributing resource within the National Historic Landmark District and the local Savannah Downtown Historic District.

The building is three bays wide, with punched openings with nine-over-nine and six-over-six windows and wood shutters, stone sills, and is topped by a hipped roof with bracketed eaves. The site also includes a two-story non-contributing carriage house at the rear (south) that fronts on West Gordon Lane as well as a surface parking area and wall that separates the rear yard from the lane.

The surrounding context includes a collection of architecturally significant buildings found in the including to the north the Mercer House and to the south the Armstrong Mansion along with a number of other ones in a rich variety of architectural styles. The Sanborn Map from 1916 shows that the area had managed to retain both the historic primary and secondary buildings that gave the area its notable architectural character even as many of the buildings had been repurposed to other uses from their original residential ones. The Sanborn Map from 1955 shows that the built environment had largely been preserved which has continued to this day resulting in the rich collection of historic buildings in a notable variety of architectural styles.

This project was most recently heard at the April 9, 2025, Historic District Board of Review (HDBR) meeting. It had been continued twice before that to allow the applicant time to address conditions to do with the design of the project. Those were addressed, which lead to an approval at that time. The project also included the installation of a swimming pool in the rear yard.

Staff recommended to approve the design amendment for the accessory structure at the rear of 11 West Gordon Street, including removal of a non-historic site wall and scaled-down footprint of the structure, with the following condition because the amendment is visually compatible and meets the standards:

1. Submit revised elevation drawings that show the wall has been removed, the smaller footprint, and revised lot coverage percentage.

PETITIONER COMMENTS:
Eli Lurie, petitioner**,** stated they have tried to be as courteous as possible with the project. He explained his process to follow the intention of the Ordinance.

PUBLIC COMMENT:
Edward Hepcoat, Kessler Collection, expressed concern about amount space consumed by the petitioner would affect their (Kessler's) five garages..

Meredith Delaney, area resident, expressed opposition to the petition.

Bill Glass, attorney for neighboring resident, stated there was a misrepresentation of information provided, as the wall is on his client's property.

BOARD DISCUSSION:
The Board stated the issue of the survey needs to be resolved, as there are two sets of stamped surveys by two different licensed surveyors.

Lurie requested to withdraw the project.

Motion

The Savannah Historic District Board of Review accepts the request of the petitioner to withdraw the petition for the amendment to the previously approved New Construction, Accessory Building, Parts I & II from April 9, 2025.

Vote Results (Not Started)
Motion:
Second:

X. APPROVED STAFF REVIEWS

XI. WORK PERFORMED WITHOUT A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS

13. Work Done Without a COA - September 2026 Report

XII. REPORT ON ITEMS DEFERRED TO STAFF

XIII. NOTICES, PROCLAMATIONS, AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

14. Staff Inspection Report - September 2026

15. Stamped Drawing Report - September 2026

XIV. OTHER BUSINESS

16. Savannah's Waterfront Community Improvement District Update

Julie Musselman, Executive Director of Savannah's Waterfront, provided an update presentation.

XV. ADJOURNMENT

17. Next HDBR Pre-Meeting - Wednesday October 14, 2026 at 12pm - 112 East State Street

18. Next HDBR Meeting - Wednesday October 14, 2026 at 1pm - 112 East State Street

19. Adjourn

There being no further business to present before the Board, the September 9, 2026 Historic District Board of Review adjourned at 4:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Caitlin Chamberlain
Director of Historic Preservation

The Chatham County - Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission provides meeting minutes which are adopted by the respective Board. Verbatim transcripts of minutes are the responsibility of the interested party.