



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: Luis Posada
MPC File No.: 26-004119-COA
Address: 234 Price Street
PIN: 20014 10007
Zoning: D-R
Staff Reviewer: Jodie Brown, AICP
Date: September 9, 2026

NATURE OF REQUEST:

The applicant is requesting 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.

CONTEXT/SURROUNDING AREA:

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.

FINDINGS:

The following standards from §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.

The restoration would restore the faded sign and generally brighten the overall sign. However, there is some concern that the restoration of the Uneeda Biscuit sign would diminish evidence of the other signs that were once in this location. The applicant has indicated that they would maintain another sign at the upper right side of the façade, but there is no mention of the lower right side or the upper left side where there is still evidence of previous signage. The proposed work is not consistent with Standard 2.

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.

There is concern that restoring the sign would lead to the loss of its ghost sign status if it is painted to look new. The sense of its age and historicity will be lost in the repainting. Restoration will also create a false sense of historical development by making the sign appear more recent than it is. Documentation and preservation should be considered in lieu of restoration. The proposed work is not consistent with Standard 3.

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.

While the sign is not original to the house, it has achieved its own significance. There is concern that restoring the sign would lead to the loss of its ghost sign status if it painted to look new. The sense of its age and historicity will be lost in the repainting. Documentation and preservation should be considered in lieu of restoration. The proposed work is not consistent with Standard 4.

Secretary of the Interior's Standards 6– Deteriorated Features. *Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.*

The applicant photographed the façade at different times of the day to understand the various layers. They also looked at other Uneeda Biscuit signs as a reference for the assorted elements of the sign. It is not clear that historic photos of the sign were found or historic photos of the other signs. It appears that the restoration is based on some supposition. The proposed work is not consistent with Standard 6.

Secretary of the Interior's Standards 7– Chemical or Physical Treatments. *Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.*

The applicant is proposing to restore the sign by cleaning, stabilizing, repointing, as needed, and repainting. There is some concern about the use of Sherwin Williams Emerald Rain Refresh Acrylic in Satin on the historic brick. This product is an impermeable, high-performance acrylic film designed to shed dirt via a slick hydrophilic surface. Historic brick and soft lime mortar are porous and require breathability to release trapped interior vapor; sealing them with a thick acrylic layer often causes moisture retention, leading to spalling, cracking, and structural masonry failure. Additionally, there is concern about the vibrancy of the proposed new colors and the overall finish.

The applicant is also proposing to clean the brick with gentle means with Prosoco Enviro Klean-EK Restoration Cleaner and Prosoco Conservare-OH100 Consolidation Treatment to stabilize the masonry. It is not clear that the consolidation treatment will work on painted masonry. The product will not be able to penetrate the brick with the painted surface blocking it. The proposed work is not consistent with Standard 7.

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 applicant used Pantone to color match the existing colors on the sign. Pantone is not an exterior paint product; it is a universal language of color that aids in matching to existing paint colors. The proposed paints will be from the Sherwin Williams Emerald Rain Refresh Acrylic line in Satin finish. There is some concern about the use of this product on the historic brick. This product is an impermeable, high-performance acrylic film designed to shed dirt via a slick hydrophilic surface. Historic brick and soft lime mortar are porous and require breathability to release trapped interior vapor; sealing them with a thick acrylic layer often causes moisture retention, leading to spalling, cracking, and structural masonry failure.

There is concern that the proposed modern-day colors will be more vibrant than what was historically on the facade. Restoration of the Uneeda Biscuit sign would also diminish evidence of the other signs that were once in this location. The applicant has indicated that they would maintain another sign at the upper right side of the façade, but there is no mention of the lower right side or the upper left side where there is still evidence of previous signage. The proposed work is not consistent with this criterion.

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, Materials.

Exterior walls shall be repaired with in-kind materials rather than replaced, provided however, if the degree of degradation does not allow repair, the degradation shall be photographically documented and verified by the Planning

Director and the replacement materials and configuration shall be of the same materials and configuration as the original wall.

The applicant has proposed using Sherwin Williams Emerald Rain Refresh Acrylic in Satin. There is some concern about the use of this product on the historic brick. This product is an impermeable, high-performance acrylic film designed to shed dirt via a slick hydrophilic surface. Historic brick and soft lime mortar are porous and require breathability to release trapped interior vapor; sealing them with a thick acrylic layer often causes moisture retention, leading to spalling, cracking, and structural masonry failure.

The applicant is also proposing to clean the brick with gentle means with Prosoco Enviro Klean-EK Restoration Cleaner and Prosoco Conservare-OH100 Consolidation Treatment to stabilize the masonry. It is not clear that the consolidation treatment will work on painted masonry. The product will not be able to penetrate the brick with the painted surface blocking it.

Appropriate paint for historic brick walls that allows the original material to breathe and a consolidation treatment that can fully penetrate the surface (if necessary) should be used. Some of the proposed products are not consistent with this historic district design standard.

Exterior Walls, Prohibited Materials.

Materials that cause damage, obscure, or change the appearance to the underlying historic fabric are prohibited.

The Sherwin Williams Emerald Rain Refresh Acrylic in Satin is not the appropriate paint for historic brick. This product is an impermeable, high-performance acrylic film designed to shed dirt via a slick hydrophilic surface. Historic brick and soft lime mortar are porous and require breathability to release trapped interior vapor; sealing them with a thick acrylic layer often causes moisture retention, leading to spalling, cracking, and structural masonry failure. An historic brick appropriate paint should be utilized.

Vinyl siding, aluminum siding, rolled asphalt, precast concrete panels, fiber cement wood simulated horizontal lap siding, fiber cement panels, EIFS, T-111, ceramic-based coatings and sealers on siding.

The Sherwin Williams Emerald Rain Refresh Acrylic in Satin is not the appropriate paint for historic brick. This product is an impermeable, high-performance acrylic film designed to shed dirt via a slick hydrophilic surface. Historic brick and soft lime mortar are porous and require breathability to release trapped interior vapor; sealing them with a thick acrylic layer often causes moisture retention, leading to spalling, cracking, and structural masonry failure.

Exterior Walls, Finishes and Treatments.

Color changes to contributing resources shall be historically appropriate.

Historic colors were typically less vibrant than the modern-day palette. With the lead additive, paint also tended to fade rather than peeling. An art conservator should be employed to ensure that the appropriate colors and finishes are used.

Cleaning, when undertaken, shall be so as not to damage historic fabric. Sandblasting and disc sanding shall not be permitted.

Staff Report - Certificate of Appropriateness
MPC File No. 26-004119-COA
234 Price Street
September 9, 2026

The applicant intends to use gentle means to clean the surface. The methodology for cleaning appears to be appropriate.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

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.

MW: CC: JB

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.