



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: **First Union Mission Baptist Church**

MPC File No.: **26-004192-COA**

Address: **536 Berrien Street**

PIN: **20031 34005**

Zoning: **D-X**

Staff Reviewer: **Alexander Merced**

Date: **September 9, 2026**

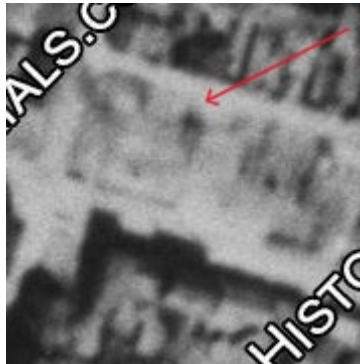
NATURE OF REQUEST:

The applicant would like to demolish an abandoned non-contributing structure located at 536 Berrien Street.

CONTEXT/SURROUNDING AREA:

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.

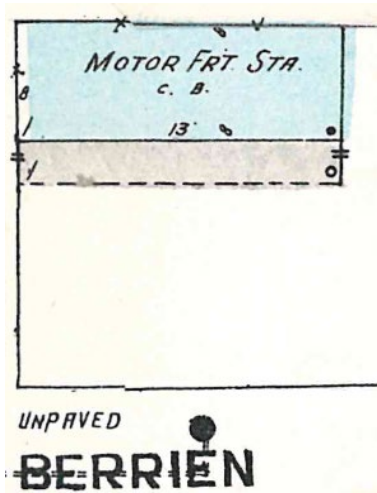
Historic aerial photographs show that the plot of land was empty in 1938, and the concrete block building was there by the next available photo taken in 1951. According to the 1955 Sanborn Map, the building was used as a motor station, potentially having to do with freight. Based off Google Street View images, the building appears to have been abandoned since at least 2007 and the roof has partially collapsed.



1. 1938 aerial showing no building



2. 1951 aerial showing subject building



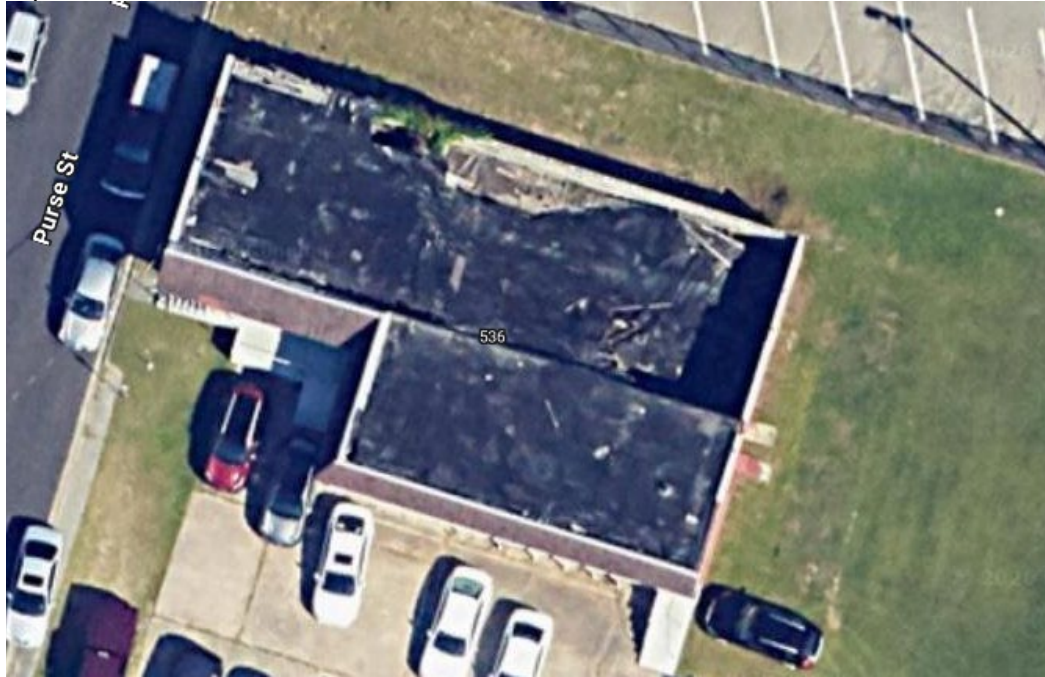
3. 1955 Sanborn Map



4. Current



5. Current



6. Aerial photo showing partial roof collapse

FINDINGS:

The following standards from the Sec 3.19.9 - HBR Criteria for Relocation or Demolition apply:

Criteria for Relocation or Demolition.

Evaluation Required. Any non-contributing resource must first be evaluated and considered for contributing status prior to issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness for relocation or demolition (See Sec. 3.16.4.b.).

Sec. 3.16.4.b. Classification of Resources and Criteria for Resource Designation. All resources within the District shall be classified and designated on the District's "Historic District Contributing Resources Map." All resources shall be identified as contributing or non-contributing as follows:

Contributing. All resources identified on the "Historic District Contributing Resources Map" having historic significance shall be considered "contributing" and worthy of preservation and shall be classified as "historic" for purposes hereunder.

Period of Significance. Contributing buildings include those within the current Period of Significance, possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and meet one of more of the following criteria:

Are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or

Are associated with the lives of significant persons in our past; or

Embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or

Have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in historic or prehistory.

Exceptional Importance. Contributing buildings include a select group of exceptional resources constructed outside the district's Period of Significance. These resources possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and meet one of more of the above criteria.

Although it was built within the period of significance, staff research into the subject property has found nothing of particular historic importance through either events, people, or distinct characteristics, and has found no reason to expect further important information to arise. The building should not be considered for designation as contributing.

Non-Contributing. New construction and all resources identified as non-contributing on the "Historic District Contributing Resources Map" are classified as non-historic for zoning purposed hereunder.

Should the resource meet the criteria for contributing status, the criteria for relocating or demolishing a contributing resource shall apply.

The resource does not meet the criteria for contributing status.

Conditions. *In granting a Certificate of Appropriateness for relocation or demolition, the Historic District Board of Review may impose, in addition to those listed below, reasonable conditions as will mitigate the negative effects of the relocation or demolition.*

Staff recommends the following conditions:

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.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

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.**

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.