



S A V A N N A H - C H A T H A M C O U N T Y
HISTORIC SITE & MONUMENT COMMISSION

Petitioner: Schuyler Benson
File No.: 26-002437-PA
Address: 2512 Habersham Street
PIN: 20075 21007
Staff Reviewer: Jodie Brown, AICP
Date: June 4, 2026

NATURE OF REQUEST:

The applicant is proposing to paint a mural of vines and flowers on the north and west facades of the building.

The property is located on the northeast corner of Habersham and 42nd Streets in the Southville Ward. The two-story, painted brick building was constructed in 1930 and designed in a simplified Neoclassical style. It features a double-height porch with a balcony at the second floor that stands proud of the front façade. The main entrance and access to the balcony are centered on the original portion of the front façade. Windows are 2/1 double hung spaced evenly on each elevation. Above the porch is a hipped roof dormer while the north slope has a larger gable roofed dormer. Post 1973, a large two-story addition that replicates the 1930s building was constructed on the south side. The property is listed as a non-contributor to the Streetcar Historic District.

FINDINGS:

The following standards from the Historic Site and Monument Commission Guidelines for Markers, Monuments and Public Art apply:

Evaluating Sites for Markers, Monuments, or Public Art. *Certain factors should be taken into consideration when evaluating whether a site is the appropriate location for a marker, monument or public art [hereto referred to as “object” to indicate the inclusion of all three types]. These factors include:*

The installation of an object should not cause overcrowding of the site, if there are existing objects. Objects should be sited far enough away from other objects as to allow the visitor proper appreciation of each individually.

The mural is located on the north and west facades of a building. There are no other murals in the immediate surrounding area. The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

The proposed object should not damage or disturb existing established vegetation on the site including low tree limbs, or significant tree roots.

There is no vegetation except grass to disturb. The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

The proposed object should not require the removal or alteration of existing above or below ground utilities.

There are no utilities that will be impacted by the proposed mural. The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

The proposed site should be large enough to accommodate an object, and should not encroach on other existing object sites, buildings, or designated green space.

The building is two-stories with a large street elevation and will not encroach on other extant elements. The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

The proposed site should not be utilized for special events (such as sports, festivals, ceremonies, etc) on a regular basis which an object would disrupt.

The owner is proposing to convert the building into a small-scale hotel. It does not appear that it will be used for special events on a special basis. The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

The proposed site should not be prone to frequent automobile accidents which could damage the proposed object.

The proposed project location is not located on a busy intersection and the mural is innocuous. The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

The proposed site should be easily accessible to pedestrians and the physically challenged (excluding marker sites).

There is a sidewalk on either side of the street allowing for visibility of the mural. The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

The proposed site should be visible and accessible from a public right of way.

The proposed mural will be visible from the public ROW. The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

The proposed site should have adequate parking nearby (excluding marker sites).

There is ample street parking available. The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

The proposed site should not have a high probability of significant archaeology unless an archaeological study is part of the proposal.

The area is heavily disturbed. There is no indication of archaeology being present in this area. Additionally, the application of a mural will not disturb the ground. The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

The proposed site should be easy to maintain.

The surface is already painted and the artist will be using paints suitable for the exterior. The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

The installation of the object should enhance the space and character of the surrounding neighborhood.

The proposed mural is along a predominantly commercial corridor with signage for the various entities. The mural would not be out of place. The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

The installation of the object should not require the alteration or removal of existing signage (traffic, street, etc).

Extant signage would not be impacted. The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

The installation of the object should not significantly affect automobile traffic sight lines.

The building is extant and already painted. The additional paint will not negatively impact any sight lines. The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

The installation of the object should enhance the design of the overall site.

The building is rather plain and painted light grey. The mural will enhance the façade. The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

The installation of the object should not require the removal or alteration of existing sidewalks, unless it is part of a comprehensive redesign for the entire site (which is generally discouraged).

There will be no impact on extant sidewalks. The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

If periodic memorial services are likely, the site should be able to accommodate them without causing undue disruption to the neighborhood, plantings, etc.

There is no mention of any proposed memorial services. The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

Site in Relation to Theme for Markers or Monuments. *The relationship between site and theme for a marker or monument is critical in determining the appropriate site for a particular theme.*

Public Art. *While public art by definition does not commemorate historical people, places, or events, its location is therefore less limited by relevance to the site. The theme of public art is considered Arts and Humanities and therefore the site should be appropriate for that theme.*

The proposed art is innocuous and appropriate for the site. The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

The location of public art in the Landmark District should respect the Oglethorpe Plan, particularly in terms of historic viewsheds and sight lines.

The proposed mural is located in the Streetcar Historic District. The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

Design. *The design of a marker, monument, or public work of art should be of the highest quality and caliber, and enhance public space. In order to promote the high standards the City of Savannah has historically enjoyed in its markers, monuments, and public art, the following guidelines should be observed.*

Monuments and Public Art. *Monuments may take on many forms including works of art, benches, statues, sculptures, obelisks, sundials, etc. Monuments are typically commissioned, site-specific pieces.*

Public art may consist of a variety of media including, but not limited to, sculpture, mosaic, fountains or other water elements, or murals. Public art may be existing artwork or commissioned artwork.

The mural will be completed by Sky Benson who has completed several murals around Savannah. A mural by this artist was approved late last year for another non-contributing property along Habersham Street. The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

The applicant may choose to donate an existing work of art for installation in a public space in cases where the project budget doesn't allow for a commissioned piece, the timeframe for installation doesn't allow for a commissioned piece, the applicant desires the posthumous acquisition of art by a desired artist, or the applicant has a work of art in a collection he/she wishes to donate. However, the public art work should follow the guidelines

(except Guidelines 18-21) and it is strongly recommended that the applicant obtain approval prior to purchase.

The applicant may choose to commission a work of art or monument. The artwork or monument must be of the highest quality and should adhere to the guidelines.

The mural will be painted with exterior quality paints and should fade similarly to other exterior paint jobs. The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

Public art should generally be considered permanent and be designed accordingly, except in special situations which will be evaluated on an individual basis.

The mural will be painted with exterior quality paints and should fade similarly. The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

Monuments and public art should be designed and constructed of materials suitable for outdoor display. All proposed materials should have performed satisfactorily in the local climate for a period of time long enough to assure permanence. Future maintenance and conservation requirements should be considered.

The mural will be painted with exterior quality paints and should fade similarly. The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

Monuments and public art should be designed to be reasonably resistant to vandalism.

The mural will be located on private property and could be repaired with similar paints should there be any vandalism. The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

Monuments and public art should be designed so as not to pose a danger to the curious public, such as the use of sharp objects or loose parts.

The mural will be limited to paint with no sharp objects. The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

Monument and public art design should include landscaping, paving, seating, drainage, lighting, fencing, or other protective measures which may be considered necessary.

Protective measures are not necessary. The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

Monuments and public art should be of superior quality and craftsmanship. Monuments should not resemble gravestones.

The mural will be painted with exterior quality paints and should fade similarly. The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

A monument should be of original design, and public art should be an original work of art (one of a kind) or reproduced in editions of less than 200.

The proposed mural is an original design by the artist. The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

Monuments and public art should not replicate an original monument or work of art.

There is no indication that the proposed mural replicates an original piece of art. The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

Monuments and public art should be designed to complement and enhance the site in which it is located. It should not compete with, dominate or encroach upon existing monuments, public art, or buildings.

The proposed mural is along a predominantly commercial corridor with signage for the various entities. The mural would not be out of place. The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

Monuments and public art should be respectful of the architectural, historical, geographical, and social/cultural context of the site.

The mural will be placed on an already painted surface. It will be respectful of the architectural, historical, geographical, and social/cultural context of the site. The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

Monuments and public art should be compatible in scale, materials, and form with its context. Context includes the buildings, monuments, public art, landscaping and open space to which the monument or public art is visually related.

The scale of the mural is consistent with the building. The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

The artist's name may be incorporated into the design but should be in a discreet location on the work of art.

The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

The designer and/or fabricator (for a monument) and the artist (for public art) should have completed projects of similar size and scale in the public arena and be able to provide appropriate documentation.

The mural will be completed by Sky Benson who has several murals around Savannah. A mural by this artist was approved late last year for another non-contributing property along Habersham Street. The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

The designer and/or fabricator (for a monument) and the artist (for public art) should have an excellent reputation and be able to provide verifiable references attesting to the quality of work.

The artist is thorough and has completed a number of other murals in the area. The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

The designer and/or fabricator (for a monument) and the artist (for public art) should be able to provide images or samples of existing similar monuments or works of art.

The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

The designer and/or fabricator (for a monument) and the artist (for public art) should be able to demonstrate the ability to meet the proposed timeframe.

The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

Mural Policy. *Statement of Purpose: The purpose of regulating murals is to ensure the continued visual aesthetic of the community, by establishing a process for compatible artistic and creative expression through murals in appropriate locations and designs. The review criteria seek to establish guidance as to the compatibility and appropriateness of the theme, location and design of murals, with minimal intrusion into artistic expression and/or the substantive, personal or social/political expressive content of the artwork. Murals will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.*

Theme.

The theme of the mural should be respectful of the greater context of the community, including historic and socio-cultural contexts.

The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

The content of a mural is protected under the laws of free speech.

The mural is innocuous. The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

The mural must comply with Georgia obscenity laws, as defined by O.C.G.A. § 16-12-80, and cannot depict sexual conduct or sexual explicit nudity, as defined on O.C.G.A. § 36-60-3, nor advertise any activity illegal under the laws of Georgia or the United States.

The mural is innocuous. The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

Location.

The installation of a mural should complement and enhance the building and be incorporated architecturally into the façade.

The proposed mural is along a predominantly commercial corridor with signage for the various entities. The mural would not be out of place. The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

The location of the mural on the building should not cover or detract from significant or character-defining architectural features.

The building is non-contributing and the mural will not cover any character-defining features. The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

Murals should enhance and complement the character of the surrounding neighborhood.

The proposed mural is along a predominantly commercial corridor with signage for the various entities. The mural would not be out of place. The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

Murals should not be located in an area which may cause undue distraction to drivers thereby creating a safety hazard.

The proposed project location is not located on a busy intersection and the mural is innocuous. The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

Generally murals should be located in mixed use and commercial areas.

The proposed mural is along a predominantly commercial corridor with signage for the various entities. The mural would not be out of place. The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

Neighborhood support or opposition should be taken into consideration.

The applicant indicated that outreach is on-going. The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

Murals should be sited far enough away from other murals as to allow the visitor proper appreciation of each individually and not cause visual clutter to the block face.

There are no other murals in the near vicinity. The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

Murals are not permitted on unpainted historic materials.

The building is a non-contributor to the Streetcar Historic District. The exterior surface has been painted for some time. The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

If proposed for a strictly residential area, neighborhood support is required.

The proposed mural is along a predominantly commercial corridor with signage for the various entities. The mural would not be out of place. The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

Design.

The scale of the mural should be appropriate to the building and the site.

The mural only takes up a small portion of the north and west facades. The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

The mural should be appropriate within the context of the surrounding neighborhood.

The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

The mural should be an original design.

The mural is an original design. The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

Sponsor and artist names may be incorporated but should be discreet and not exceed 5% of the design.

The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

Paint utilized should be of superior quality and intended for exterior use. Generally reflective, neon, and fluorescent paints should not be used.

The surface is already painted and the artist will be using paints suitable for the exterior. The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

If intended to be permanent, the mural should have a weatherproof and vandalism-resistant coating.

The surface is already painted and the artist will be using paints suitable for the exterior. The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

Artist Qualifications.

The artist should have completed projects of similar size and scale in the public arena and be able to provide appropriate documentation.

The artist has completed several projects around Savannah including one that was approved late last year. The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

The artist should have an excellent reputation and be able to provide verifiable references attesting to the quality of work.

The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

The artist should be able to provide images or samples of existing similar monuments or works of art.

The applicant provided other examples of his work in the application packet. The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

The artist should be able to demonstrate the ability to meet the proposed timeframe.

The applicant has indicated that the mural will take approximately 7 days to complete. The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

Public Notice. *As required in the Master Plan and Guidelines, written notice was sent to all property owners, and the neighborhood association, within 200 feet of the subject property.*

Noticing was provided to surrounding residents and the neighborhood association. The proposed mural is consistent with this standard.

Staff Report – MURAL
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STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

APPROVE the request to install a mural on the building located at 2512 Habersham Street AS REQUESTED because the proposed project meets the standards in the Master Plan and Guidelines for Markers, Monuments, and Public Art.

MW: CC: JB

Note: This recommendation could change subject to new information provided at the Historic Site and Monument Commission meetings. Decisions or recommendations will be made by the Historic Site and Monument Commission at the public hearing based on information provided at the meeting, as well as information submitted for the staff recommendation.