



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: City of Savannah, Laura Walker

File No.: 26-000102-PA

Address: Multiple – Storm Drains

Staff Reviewer: Caitlin Chamberlain

Date: March 5, 2026

NATURE OF REQUEST:

The applicant is requesting approval to paint four (4) storm drains throughout East Savannah. This is Phase 2 of a similar drainage project that was approved on August 4, 2022 [22-003268-PA]. As the applicant stated, “the project includes installing murals on 14 storm drains in East Savannah to convey the important message of ‘Only Rain Down the Drain’ because each drain is a direct connection to our rivers and ocean.” The selected drains and their locations are included within the submittal packet. Proposed locations include:

1. Southwest corner of Bull St. and Maupas Ave.
2. Daffin Park (Daffin Park Drive- Morris field side)
3. Hubert Middle School (2 drains at this location)

PROJECT HISTORY:

Phase I of the Storm Drain Art Project was approved in 2022. It is an education project that aims to bring attention to our waterways, reduce pollution, and protect our local ecosystems through art installed on select drains throughout the City.

Savannah lies within two major watersheds, the Savannah River Watershed and the Ogeechee River Watershed. When it storms, rain flows into storm drains that connect to our canals, rivers, and the Atlantic Ocean. To keep our waterways healthy for fishing and swimming, and to mitigate flooding issues, City Code directs that only rain go down the drain.

Phase I included drains that flow into the Ogeechee River Watershed and Phase II focuses on 14 storm drains located on Savannah’s east side that flow into the Savannah River Watershed. As with Phase I, the City held a call for artists, open to Chatham County artists of all backgrounds aged 18 and over. The City will provide paint and materials.

PROJECT HISTORY:

This project was first presented at the February 5, 2026, HSMC meeting where there was discussion regarding the neighborhood support for the proposed murals on drains in residential areas. The HSMC decision was as follows:

The Historic Site and Monument Commission does hereby continue the request to install fourteen (14) storm drain murals throughout the East side of Savannah, to a date not to exceed the May 7, 2026, Historic Site and Monument Commission Meeting to allow the applicant time to obtain neighborhood support for the proposed murals in exclusively residential areas.

The applicant has since reduced the quantity from 14 to 4 proposed storm drain murals. There are two within T-C zoned areas and two within the property of Hubert Middle School, which has received a letter of support from the Principal, Mr. Timothy Cox.

FINDINGS:

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

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 standard is met. The theme of the project is improving water quality in the Savannah River and Ogeechee River watersheds. It is respectful to the context of the community and is not intrusive, as the murals will be painted directly onto the tops of the storm drains in visible areas.

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

The mural must comply with Georgia obscenity laws, as defined by O.C.G.A. § 16-12-80, and cannot depict sexual conduct or sexually 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 standard is met. The designs comply with the Georgia obscenity laws. They do not advertise any illicit or illegal activities under the laws of Georgia or the United States.

Location.

The installation of a mural should complement and enhance the building and be incorporated architecturally into the façade. The location of the mural on the building should not cover or detract from significant or character-defining architectural features.

The standards are met. The storm drain murals are complementary to, as well as enhance the aesthetic of the storm drains. Since these are all on the ground over the drains, they will have no impact on any architectural features.

*Murals should enhance and complement the character of the surrounding neighborhood.
Murals should not be located in an area which may cause undue distraction to drivers thereby creating a safety hazard.*

The standards are met. The storm drain murals will be respectful to the greater context of the neighborhoods and staff does not believe they will be located in an area which may cause undue distraction to the drivers thereby creating a safety hazard. The project is targeted towards pedestrians and therefore will not be a distraction to drivers, as the chosen storm drains are along walking paths.

Generally, murals should be located in mixed use and commercial areas.
The standard is met. The storm drain murals are located within mixed-use areas.

Neighborhood support or opposition should be taken into consideration.
The applicant provided a letter of support from the Principal of Hubert Middle School. The other two proposed murals are in T-C zoned areas.

*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.
Murals are not permitted on unpainted historic materials.
The treatment and application of murals located on any historic material should follow all relevant Preservation Briefs as published by the National Park Service Technical Preservation Services.*

The storm drain murals are proposed in four (4) locations and will not interfere with each other or any other public art in the vicinities. No historic materials are involved.

Design.

*The scale of the mural should be appropriate to the building and the site.
The mural should be appropriate within the context of the surrounding neighborhood.
The mural should be an original design.*

The standards are met. All proposed storm drain murals are sized to the tops of the drains where they would be painted. All are original in design.

Paint utilized should be of superior quality and intended for exterior use.
The standard is met. Proposed paint includes:

- Behr Premium Tinted concrete paint and primer
- Behr white concrete base paint and paint tint
- Behr Exterior water-based house paint over exterior primer
- H&C Shield-Crete acrylic clear glaze coat

- H&C Colortop water based solid color concrete stain

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

As noted above, the standard is met.

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

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

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

The standard is met. A Call for Artists was announced and coordinated through the City. Artists were asked to submit a written proposal, artist bio and images representing their artwork. Design specifications requested original designs calling attention to our waterways. Applicants could choose which drain shape they wanted to submit a design for, but each artist was assigned to a specific drain site by the review panel.

Funding.

Budget. *The Mayor and Aldermen do not fund new markers, monuments, or works of art. The applicant is fully responsible for funding the design, construction, installation, and any necessary landscaping, paving, or lighting involved with a new marker, monument, or work of art.*

The City is the applicant and will fund the project.

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. A sign was posted on the property fifteen days prior to the meeting. No comments were received from the public.*

The standard is met. Notice was sent to all property owners, and the neighborhood association, within 200 feet of the subject properties and signs were posted. No comments have been received at the time of the writing of this report.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommend that the Historic Site and Monument Commission recommend approval to the Savannah City Council, for the proposal to install four (4) storm drain murals throughout the East side of Savannah as requested because the proposed work meets the criteria for murals within the Murals, Monuments, and Public Art Master Plan and Guidelines for the City of Savannah.

MW: CC

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.