



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: Windsor Forest Garden Club, Elizabeth Watts

File No.: 26-003767-HM

Address: 10875 Abercorn Street

PIN: 20694 01007

Staff Reviewer: Caitlin Chamberlain

Date: September 3, 2026

NATURE OF REQUEST:

The applicant is requesting approval to install two memorial marker signs at the Veterans Memorial Park located at 10875 Abercorn Street. One sign is a Blue Star Memorial Highway Marker and the other is a Gold Star Memorial as a tribute to the Gold Star Families, who have experienced loss of an immediate family member as the result of active-duty military service.

FINDINGS:

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

***Evaluating Themes for Markers and Monuments.** New markers and monuments commemorate and honor people, places, and/or events.*

Proposed themes should fall into one or more of the following categories.

Arts and Humanities. Includes art, architecture, music, theater, literature, education, etc.

Science and Engineering. Includes technology, inventions, medical, communications, etc.

Civil and Institutional.

Social and Humanitarian.

Industry and Commerce. Includes economics, agriculture, transportation, etc.

Politics and Government.

Military History. Includes people, places, or events.

Religious History. Includes people, places, or events.

Maritime History.

Colonial History.

Local History. Includes folklore and/or local heroes.

Cultural and Ethnic History.
Education.

The markers relate to military history and local history as a tribute to the local veterans in Savannah who have served.

The proposed theme should have documented significant, clear and direct local relevance to the history and development of Chatham County. The local focus should be the predominant theme of the monument.

The level of significance should be high enough to warrant a public presence. The person, place or event commemorated should not have been sufficiently commemorated elsewhere in the County. The theme should be distinct and original, and not be duplicated in other existing markers or monuments.

The inclusion of the marker signs at Veterans Memorial Park will complement the site rather than overcrowd or overdo it with this type of tribute. This park is an ideal location for both signs as a tribute to local veterans, past and present.

The theme should reflect a larger connection to the community as a whole, and not only to one distinct group.

Commemorated events should have enduring historical significance and have occurred over fifty years ago.

Commemorated persons should have enduring historical significance and have been dead at least twenty-five years. Living persons should not be commemorated.

In the case of the Blue Star and Gold Star Memorial signs, these are part of a national program which do pay tribute to veterans of all wars in US History. There are no specific events or persons listed by name or date, which would negate these conditions.

There should be significant documented evidence (written or oral) of the commemorated event, person, or place.

As noted above, there is not one specific war referred to nor specifically named veterans, which would be impossible to fit among two signs.

In 1945, the National Council of Garden Clubs began the Blue Star Memorial Highway Program and began a highway system that covers thousands of miles across the United States. This was the first national scale project taken on by garden clubs. The blue star is based on it being an icon in WWII, seen on flags and banners in homes and public spaces to honor family members who were away at war.

The Gold Star Families Memorial Marker program began in 2015 to specifically recognize and honor the families of service members who lost their lives in service to the nation. The gold star is significant as a solemn honor, originating from the stars that replaced the blue when a service member lost their life.

Both sign types follow the same administrative pathway where applications are first handled via the National Garden Clubs, Inc. where there is a Blue Star Memorial Chair and has a set format that includes the wording: *A tribute to the Armed Forces that have defended the United States of*

America” and beneath that is the custom space to note whom the marker is sponsored by. The Gold Star signs state that the marker is “a tribute to Gold Star Families who’s loved one paid the ultimate price defending the United States of America.”

The National Garden Clubs website has an ongoing mapping project showing where every Blue and Gold Star sign is located.

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 signs would flank a large American flag on the grounds of the park, in a symmetrical fashion that would not be overcrowded. This flag is the largest American flag in Savannah, accommodated by a 100’ flagpole.

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

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

The applicant consulted with the appropriate City departments to confirm that these standards are met.

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

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

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

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

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

The proposed site should be easy to maintain.

The above site standards are met.

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

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

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

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

The above installation standards are met.

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

The standard is met.

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.*

Marker. *A marker should be erected in as close proximity to the site to which it is related as possible and be clearly visible from a public right-of-way.*

Markers commemorating an event should be sited within 100 feet of the event site or adjacent to the nearest public right-of-way.

Markers commemorating a person should be sited where that person was born, lived, died, or performed some act of enduring significance or adjacent to the nearest public right-of-way.

A park dedicated to veterans is an appropriate location for these signs.

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.*

Markers. *Markers may be mounted on a freestanding pole, wall-mounted, or embedded in the ground. As the primary purpose is to inform the public about an event, place or person, the aesthetic significance of a marker is generally minimal.*

Markers on a freestanding pole should be the standard Georgia Historical Society (GHS) Marker style: two-sided, cast aluminum with a 30" x 42" plate size. The shape should match the GHS marker shape. The marker should have a black background with white, silver or gold text. Temporary markers may be other shapes, sizes, and colors.

With this being a nationwide sign program, there is a set design standard which is similar to the GHS style historical marker signs, specifications shown at the top of the next page, and taken from the National Garden Club, Inc.'s website

HIGHWAY MARKER (BLUE STAR ONLY)

- ★ Permitted on highways and highway rest areas
- ★ Overall height when erected is 7'6"
- ★ Marker size is approximately 30.5" by 46" wide (inside plate is 30"x42), cast aluminum, identical both sides. Lettering is raised relief; emblem is modeled relief; prismatic star. Caption lines 2x2"; narrative PA"; Signature lines 1"; Baked enamel finish
- ★ COLOR: Polychrome background (drab olive green); gold leaf letter faces and emblem border rings; star is blue
- ★ POST: Aluminum, octagonal, 35-pound weight. Length is 7' designed for 3' insertion in the ground. (**Replacement Post: \$375.**) A 10' post is available for an additional charge of \$175. (**Replacement 10' Post: \$500.**)

PRICE: \$2460. (including 7' post)
\$2635. (including 10' post)

MEMORIAL MARKER (BLUE & GOLD STAR FAMILIES)

- ★ Permitted on the grounds of National Cemeteries, Veteran Administration Medical Centers and any other appropriate civic location, as approved by NGC Blue Star Chairman
- ★ COLOR: Same as Highway Marker
- ★ All details of Highway Marker apply. Both Markers are delivered with eight setscrews

PRICE: \$2460. (includes 7' post)
\$2635. (includes 10' post)



Markers not erected through the GHS's marker program shall not bear the GHS or state seal.

The signs will have the National Garden Clubs, Inc. seal.

Except the marker title, the marker text should be not more than 1" in height, and not less than 1/2".

Marker text should be created in a manner that, to the extent possible, prevents fading and erosion.

Markers should be made of an enduring, non-corroding material.

Markers should be considered permanent and designed accordingly.

The above design standards are met.

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 applicant must provide a realistic budget in Part II Final Design and Funding. The budget should be based on cost estimates provided by the manufacturer, artist, installer and/or contractor, as appropriate. The budget should include funding goals and

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deadlines. Should funding goals and deadlines fail to be met, the HSMC may, at its sole discretion, reconsider the application. The applicant must be capable of raising the necessary funding. Construction of the monument or installation of the work of art will not begin until all of the funding has been secured.

The budget was provided in the application packet, with confirmation the Windsor Forest Garden Club Treasurer that the funding of \$4,930 is secured for this purpose.

Escrow Payment. *All markers, monuments and public art erected on public property become the property of the Mayor and Aldermen. The Mayor and Aldermen assume responsibility for the future maintenance and upkeep of the marker, monument or artwork. Therefore, an initial Escrow Payment is required of the applicant subsequent to approval of the application. The Mayor and Aldermen, or their designee, will determine the appropriate Escrow Payment and will notify the applicant. The Escrow Payment must be paid prior to construction/installation of the monument or public art. Any marker, monument or artwork erected on private property is the responsibility of the property owner.*

The applicant is aware that there is an escrow fee set by the City upon approval and has acknowledged that they are prepared to pay this fee.

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. No public comment had been received at the time of the writing of this report.*

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STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Historic Site and Monument Commission recommend approval to the Savannah City Council, for the installation of one (1) Blue Star Memorial sign and one (1) Gold Star Memorial sign at Veterans Memorial Park as requested because the markers meet the standards within the Markers, 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.