



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: Luis Posada, Jr.
File No.: 26-004118-PA
Address: 234 Price Street
PIN: 20014 10007
Staff Reviewer: Jodie Brown, AICP
Date: September 3, 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 also tend to peel rather than slowly fading away.

Preservationist 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.

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 ghost sign on the north side of 234 Price Street has been in place since approximately the late 1890s. There is no overcrowding of the site and ample room for individual appreciation.

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

No existing vegetation will be disturbed as the immediate area is devoid of plants.

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

The project would involve restoration of an existing ghost sign. No above or below ground utilities would be impacted or disturbed.

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 project would involve restoration of an existing ghost sign, it will not encroach on any other buildings or sites.

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 ghost sign is located on the side of a private residence and will not be used for special events.

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

The ghost sign is located along Price Street but is not at a major intersection which can be prone to frequent accidents.

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

The site is easily accessible along Price Street. It can be accessed via Price Street or the sidewalk.

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

The site is easily accessible along Price Street. It can be accessed via Price Street or the sidewalk.

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

There is street parking around the site.

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

There will be no ground disturbance, but the ghost sign could be considered historic archaeology.

The proposed site should be easy to maintain.

As noted previously, the ghost sign has been in place since approximately the late 1890s. Over the decades, the sign has faded and there have been other painted signs at this location as evidenced by the shadows. The applicant intends to use the following materials:

- Paint-Emerald Rain Refresh Exterior Acrylic Satin
- Stabilization Product-Prosoco Conservare OH100 Consolidation Treatment
- Brick Restoration Cleaner Product-Prosoco Enviro Klean EK Restoration Cleaner
- Lime Putty Product-Niagara Mature Lime Putty

The applicant has provided a method for cleaning the surface which includes testing with the mild solution and using a soft brush and a HEPA vacuum on low to remove loose debris.

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

The ghost sign is extant.

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

There should be no alteration to existing street signage.

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

The sign is extant, so there will be no change to sight lines.

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

The restoration would restore faded symbols 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 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).

No sidewalks will be harmed during the process.

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

There should be no services at this site.

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 proposed artwork is extant.

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 owns the wall where the ghost sign is located.

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 ghost sign is existing.

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

The ghost sign is permanent.

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.

As noted previously, the ghost sign has been in place since approximately the late 1890s. 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 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.

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

The ghost sign is historic, and the application of graffiti resistant products could be detrimental to the historic brick.

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.

There are no sharp objects on the surface.

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

This is an extant ghost sign.

Monuments and public art should be of superior quality and craftsmanship.

The sign is existing.

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.

At the time that this sign was originally painted, the National Biscuit Company had launched a national marketing campaign. Signs were painted on buildings across the country. It appears that they were site specific and the designs were typically distinct.

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

The sign is existing.

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 sign is existing.

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

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.

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 sign is existing.

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 applicant is proposing to use David Laughlin, a local artist, to restore the mural. He has done a number of murals around town. There was no evidence on conservation/restoration work provided.

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 applicant provided references for the muralist which included representatives from the Savannah City Market, Old Town Trolley Tours and Savannah Visitor Information Center.

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 applicant provided images of the muralist's completed works.

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.

Restoration is a process which may involve testing periods. A timeframe was not indicated in the submittal.

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.*

Design.

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

The mural is extant.

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

The mural is extant.

The mural should be an original design.

The mural is extant.

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

There is no indication that any sponsor or muralist names will be added to the ghost sign.

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

The applicant has proposed using Sherwin Williams Emerald Rain Refresh Acrylic 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.

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

The ghost sign is historic, and the application of graffiti resistant products could be detrimental to the historic brick.

If other, non-paint materials, are proposed to be used, their lifespan should be considered and incorporated into the removal plan, if temporary.

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.

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 applicant is proposing to use David Laughlin, a local artist, to restore the mural. He has done a number of murals around. There was no evidence on conservation/restoration work provided.

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

The applicant provided references for the muralist which included representatives from the Savannah City Market, Old Town Trolley Tours and Savannah Visitor Information Center.

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

Photos of the artist's mural were provided in the submittal packet.

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

Restoration is a process which may involve testing periods. A timeframe was not indicated in the submittal.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

CONTINUE the request until the November 5, 2026, Historic Sites & Monuments Commission 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 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.