



**SAVANNAH-CHATHAM COUNTY HISTORIC SITE AND MONUMENT
COMMISSION
HISTORICAL MARKER RECOMMENDATION**

PETITIONER: Jerelene P. Williams
2233 Glynnwood Drive
Savannah, GA 31404

FILE No.: 19-001433-HM

LOCATION: 77 East River Street

DATE: April 4, 2019

NATURE OF REQUEST: The petitioner is requesting approval to replace an existing marker with a new marker on the base of The African American Monument located on public property at 77 East River Street. The existing marker was approved and installed on the base of the monument in 2003 [File No. C-030703-35815-2] as a “temporary plaque” to raise funds to pay for the previously installed monument. The new marker will serve as the platform for the monument title as well as information regarding a previous sponsor/donor. The existing marker is 9”x9” and the new marker is proposed to be 10”x12” and 1/8” thick (.125”).

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.

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The standard is met. The proposed themes for the marker are Cultural and Ethnic History, Social and Humanitarian, and Local History.

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 standards are met. The monument is a statue of an African American family with a quote from Maya Angelou engraved on the base that reflects the slave ship experience. The proposed marker features the name of the monument, its original dedication date, and the sculptress's name. It also contains the name, life dates, and life summary of Dr. Abbie H. Jordan who was a driving force behind locating this monument (sponsor/donor).

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 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.

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

The standards are met.

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 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 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 standards are met. The marker will not change the existing site conditions.

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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 standard is met. The base of the monument has a lot of uninterrupted open space where the marker is proposed to be located.

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

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 be easily accessible to pedestrians and the physically challenged (excluding marker sites).

The standards are met. It is a pedestrian-only area that is accessible.

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 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.

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).

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

The standards are met. The site is located on the interior of the public River Walk and will not require alterations of sidewalks, traffic lights, or landscaping/plantings.

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.*

The intent of the standard is met. The marker is located directly on the base of the monument.

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

The standard is met. The marker's plaque will not bear the GHS or state seal.

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

The standard is not met. The marker title is 36 point (which is 1/2" high) and so is the donor name, and this is the tallest proposed text. Other text sizes range from 28 to 20 point.

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

The standard is met. The text is engraved.

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

The standard is met. The marker is proposed to be constructed from zinc.

The following is the proposed marker text:

The African American Monument
Dedicated July 27, 2003
In Honor Of
Dr. Abbie H. Jordan
(1925-2019)

Educator, Leader, Trailblazer and Community Activist

Dr. Jordan's vision, tenacity and financial contributions were the driving forces that ensured the Savannah Riverfront was the home of the first statue in Savannah that honors African Americans. The Consortium of Doctors, Ltd., an organization that Dr. Jordan founded in 1991, made significant contributions to this effort.

Sculptress: Dorothy Spradley
This plaque unveiled July 26, 2019.

Text. *The text for a marker, monument or work of art is considered part of the overall design concept. Placement of the text, font type and size, etc. should be included with the final design drawings.*

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Text should be well-researched and based on historically accurate, documented facts.

The text should accurately and effectively convey to the reader the desired message.

Quotations should be noted accordingly and permission from the appropriate authority received.

Text should avoid offensive, obscene, or inflammatory language.

The standards are met.

Donor names may be included provided the names are in an identical but smaller font than the rest of the text and that no slogans or corporate logos are included.

The standard is not met. The donor name font size is the same as the name of the monument. Staff recommends that the font size for the monument name be increased. Staff requests a final design drawing of the marker for approval.

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 cost of the marker is \$530 (including freight) but it is unclear who will fund the marker. The applicant indicates that she has spoken to the City of Savannah's Monument Upkeep Team who has agreed to install the marker.

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 must provide an escrow payment.

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.

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BOARD DISCUSSION:

During the meeting, the public and the Board expressed their concern about several items regarding this monument:


- Deterioration of the Maya Angelou quote on the granite base;
- Conservation of the letters left at the monument by the public (mailbox? City archivist?)
- Adding landscaping around the barren monument (appropriate plants such as Indigo?)

The Board directed staff to follow-up on these items with the appropriate City departments.


RECOMMENDATION TO CITY COUNCIL:

Approve to replace an existing marker with a new marker on the base of The African American Monument located on public property at 77 East River Street with the following conditions to be provided for staff review and approval because otherwise the marker meets the standards:

1. Increase the font height of the monument title to a minimum of 1” and ensure that all other text is not less than ½” in height. Ensure that the sponsor/donor’s name font height is smaller than the monument title.
2. Provide a final design drawing of the marker.
3. Provide an escrow payment.



Dr. Nicholas Henry, Chairman
Historic Site and Monument Commission




Date



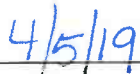
Melanie Wilson, Executive Director
Chatham County-Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission



Date



Leah G. Michalak, Director of Historic Preservation
Chatham County-Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission



Date

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