



SAVANNAH-CHATHAM COUNTY HISTORIC SITE AND MONUMENT COMMISSION

HISTORICAL MARKER RECOMMENDATION

PETITIONER: City of Savannah, Luciana Spracher

FILE No.: 22-003721-HM

LOCATION: Public Right-of- Way at West 46th Street and Bulloch Street

DATE: December 1, 2022

NATURE OF REQUEST:

The applicant is requesting a recommendation for approval from the Historic Site and Monument Commission to City Council to install a 42"x 38" cast aluminum double-sided roadside historical marker in Cann Park at the public right-of-way intersection of West 46th Street and Bulloch Street to commemorate Savannah Civil Rights Leader, attorney, and City Council Member Robert Edward "Robbie" Robinson.

As per the applicant:

"The marker will be located in the public right-of-way in the southeast corner of Cann Park near the intersection of West 46th Street and Bulloch Street. It will be located in the tree lawn between the street and the walking path, and between two large trees and near a lamppost. The City of Savannah Park and Tree Department has reviewed and approved the installation at this location."

The proposed marker is to read as follows:

Savannah civil rights leader, attorney, and City Council Member Robert Edward "Robbie" Robinson spent his formative years in the Cann Park neighborhood. Mr. Robinson was born in Savannah on July 30, 1947, and spent most of his childhood in the home at 706 West 46th Street. As a member of the NAACP Youth Council, Robinson participated in non-violent direct-action protests, including wade-ins at Tybee Beach, for which he was arrested, in 1963. He was among the first Black students to integrate Savannah High School, graduating in 1964. He continued his civil rights work as an attorney, representing civil rights and employee discrimination cases, and serving as general legal counsel for the Savannah Branch NAACP. In 1982, he was elected to City Council as the first Black alderman to represent the 5th District. He continued to fight for racial and economic equity while on Council, and secured much-needed improvements for his District, including paved roads, improved drainage, and traffic lights. Robinson was serving his second term on Council when a mail bomb sent to his law office on Abercorn Street exploded. He died on December 18, 1989, from injuries suffered during the attack.

Erected by the City of Savannah.

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PROJECT HISTORY:

The application was initially submitted for the September 1, 2022, HSMC Meeting, with a sign location at 1316 Abercorn Street, the house where Robinson had his law office. However, staff found that the proposed design for the marker did not fit within the required dimensions. Additionally, the current residents at 1316 Abercorn Street had concerns about the proximity to their front door and the potential for increased foot traffic outside of their residence. City staff (the applicant) and MPC staff met with the residents to discuss a revised plan and the applicant continued the application to provide more time to redesign the sign to meet the dimension requirements, and a new sign location was selected.

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.

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

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

Local History. Includes folklore and/or local heroes.

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

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

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

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

The standard is met. As per the applicant:

“The marker addresses the themes of Civic and Institutional, Social and Humanitarian, and Local History (folklore and/or local heroes).

“Robinson was both an integral part of the Civil Rights Movement in Savannah, Georgia and an influential figure in community organizing in the era after the Civil Rights Movement. Through his

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life-long dedication to fighting for civil rights, as well as his work building upon the accomplishments of the Civil Rights Movement as a Civil Rights attorney and as a City Alderman, Robinson exemplifies the Civil Rights Movement by embodying the idea that local organizing and activism is the impetus for real social and political change.”

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 standard is met. There are no other markers, monuments, or public art in the vicinity of the proposed marker location.

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

The applicant noted that the City of Savannah Park and Tree Department has reviewed and approved installation at this location. They will coordinate the exact placement to avoid roots of two adjacent trees.

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

The City is the applicant and has submitted an 811 request to ensure the location is clear of all utilities before installation.

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 is large enough to accommodate the marker. The standard is met.

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 is not utilized for special events.

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

The proposed site is a grassy area within Cann Park and not prone to automobile accidents.

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

The standard is met. The proposed site is within a greenspace in a public park, near a sidewalk, and physically accessible.

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

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The standard is met. The proposed site is visible from the public right-of-way and is accessible from the adjacent public sidewalk.

The proposed site should be easy to maintain.

The City of Savannah will install the proposed marker and will be responsible for all future maintenance of the marker.

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

The marker will enhance the space by providing a historic interpretation of an important civil rights figure who grew up in the Cann Park neighborhood.

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 standard is met. The proposed marker will be located in the 800 block of West 46th Street, close to Alderman Robinson's childhood home in the 700 block of West 46th Street.

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.

Markers not erected through the GHS's marker program shall 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".

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 standards are met. The marker meets the design requirements.

- The sign is 42" x 38" which matches the GHS marker size. Staff would like to note that the 38" in height is from the center line of the sign with the arch portion, whereas the 30" height noted in the Master Plan & Guidelines is the right and left sides of the sign. Staff confirmed this by measuring a GHS sign in Colonial Park Cemetery.
- The material is cast aluminum with a black finish, with gold lettering and the City logo.

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- The font style is Times New Roman. The footer is Times New Roman Bold. The letters in the text body are 0.8” tall and the title letters are 1.8” tall.
- The sign will be created by the same manufacturer used by GHS.

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 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.

Per the applicant:

“The City of Savannah Office of Management and Budget has identified and secured the needed funding for the marker, including the cost of installation and the maintenance escrow identified by the Park and Tree Department.”

The estimated overall cost for the proposed historical marker is \$4,779.00 which includes:

- 42”x 38” Double-sided Aluminum Marker: \$3,232.00
- 3 ½” x 7’ round post: \$235.00
- Art Development for Graphics: \$65.00
- Estimated Shipping: \$247.00
- Park and Tree Department Installation: \$500.00
- Maintenance Escrow: \$500.00

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 City is the applicant and is taking on the responsibility of the maintenance escrow.

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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.

RECOMMENDATION TO CITY COUNCIL:

The Historic Site and Monument Commission recommend approval to the Savannah City Council to install a historical marker in Cann Park at the public right-of-way near the intersection of West 46th Street and Bulloch Street as requested because the proposed work meets the Master Plan and Guidelines.

DocuSigned by:

Kristopher Monroe

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Mr. Kristopher Monroe, Chairman
Historic Site and Monument Commission

December 1, 2022
Date

DocuSigned by:

Melanie Wilson

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

December 1, 2022
Date

DocuSigned by:

Leah G. Michalak

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

December 1, 2022
Date

MW: LGM: cc