



**SAVANNAH-CHATHAM COUNTY HISTORIC SITE AND MONUMENT  
COMMISSION  
MONUMENT AND PUBLIC ART RECOMMENDATION**

**PETITIONER:** CITY OF SAVANNAH, Laura Walker  
20 Interchange Court  
Savannah, GA 31405

**FILE No.:** 22-003268-PA

**LOCATION:** 44<sup>th</sup> Street and Chatham Crescent; Kerry Street at  
Dixie Avenue; Cedar Street at DeLesseps Avenue;  
Atlantic Avenue and 54<sup>th</sup> Street; Atlantic Avenue and  
56<sup>th</sup> Street; 62<sup>nd</sup> Street and Habersham Street; 15  
Blueridge Avenue; 414 Lee Boulevard; 9402 White  
Bluff Road; Woodley Road at Windsor Park

**DATE:** August 4, 2022

**NATURE OF REQUEST:**

The applicant is requesting approval to paint ten storm drains throughout the Casey Drainage Basin in the Ogeechee River Watershed. The storm drains are at the following ten locations: 44<sup>th</sup> Street and Chatham Crescent; Kerry Street at Dixie Avenue; Cedar Street at DeLesseps Avenue; Atlantic Avenue and 54<sup>th</sup> Street; Atlantic Avenue at 56<sup>th</sup> Street; 62<sup>nd</sup> Street and Habersham Street; 15 Blueridge Avenue (Juliet Low Elementary School); 414 Lee Boulevard (Heard Elementary School); 9402 White Bluff Road (White Bluff Elementary School); and Woodley Road at Windsor Park. The mission of this project is to raise awareness and gain community support in decreasing pollution and bacterial contamination of the waterways that have been placed on the State of Georgia's impaired waters list.

Per the applicant:

“Working with Cultural Affairs, Recreation Services and the Savannah-Chatham County Public School System, the Water Resources Department plans to paint ten storm drains within the larger Casey Drainage Basin. This Basin flows into the Vernon River and three of the waterways are impaired due to pollution. This public outreach and engagement project will be used to comply with the City's Municipal Stormwater permit and is phase one of three to be implemented city-wide.

“The proposed storm drain murals are planned to start in September. City staff will secure the drains with barricades and install a tent over each one. They will also clean, prep and seal the drains. Artists will be given supplies to complete their work. The sealants (for metal and concrete) and paint are Sherwin Williams products which have been used by other cities for storm drain art projects. The life of the installation is projected to range from three to five years or longer. The original designs can be repainted, or the drain can be cleaned and prepped for a new design approved by HSMC and City Council prior to installation.”

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**CONTEXT:**

The Casey Drainage Basin flows into the Vernon River and three of its waterways are impaired due to pollution. It connects to Hayners Creek and converges with Harmon Creek. The Casey Basin is a large basin made up of subbasins called Casey South (South of Victory Drive), Chippewa (south of Eisenhower Drive), Wilshire (surrounding White Bluff Road) and Windsor (within the Windsor Forest neighborhood).

There are three phases that this project will cover but due to the impaired designation, the Casey Basin was deemed the most critical area to address.

Per the applicant:

“In 2005, the Georgia Environmental Protection Division categorized the Casey Basin impaired. This requires the City to take actions to reduce the main pollutant- bacteria. The City is required to install water quality improvement elements to stormwater infrastructure and conduct public outreach because much of the bacteria comes from humans, pet waster and litter. The goal is to improve water quality so Casey and Hayners Creeks can be removed from the State’s impaired waters list. Community support is critical to delisting these waterways.

“This project is part of a larger campaign to lift the lowly storm drain to a level of prominence, so we are reminded of our connection to our rivers and ocean. We are reminded that our actions impact the wildlife and local economies that depend on our waters staying healthy.

“Storm drain selections were made based on location in the Casey Basin, public visibility, and safety. Four drain locations are in City parks and four are adjacent to elementary schools. The others are in areas where there is moderate to heavy pedestrian and bicycle activity. Coordination with school and City Park staff will be ongoing, but all schools and City staff have approved the project concept.”

The City held a Call for Artists to send their design proposals and highly encouraged applications towards emerging artists, local artists, and artists that are part of minoritized or historically excluded communities such as Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC). The ten selected designs and their locations are included in the application packet.

**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.*

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***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 throughout the Casey Basin.

*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 standard is met. Notice was sent to all property owners, and the neighborhood association, within 200 feet of the subject properties. A sign was posted on the property fifteen days prior to the meeting. No comments were received.

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*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 ten different 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. The sealants and paint are Sherwin Williams products which have been used by other cities for storm drain art projects. The City will provide these supplies to all artists involved, thus providing consistency of materials used.

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

*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 estimated that the paintings will last between three and five years, with an option for repainting the design if it fades or allowing for a new design pending approval from HSMC and the City Council. Staff recommends application of a weatherproof and vandalism resistant coating once the pieces are finished.

***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 by the City's Cultural Affairs Department. A panel consisting of city staff, two local artists, a representative from the

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non-profit group Oceana, and a prominent ecologist selected the winners from 40 entries. Submission criteria requested that the applicants were at least 18 years old, a resident of Chatham County and they 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 of the ten artists was assigned to a specific drain site by the 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. A sign was posted at all ten properties fifteen days prior to the meeting.

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**RECOMMENDATION TO CITY COUNCIL:**

**The Historic Site and Monument Commission recommend approval to the Savannah City Council of the storm drain murals with the condition that:**

- 1. The applicant ensures that the murals have a weatherproof or vandalism resistant coating.**

**because otherwise it meets the standards in the Master Plan and Guidelines for Markers, Monuments, and Public Art.**

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*Kristopher Monroe* August 4, 2022  
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**Mr. Kristopher Monroe, Chairman** Date  
**Historic Site and Monument Commission**

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*Melanie Wilson* August 4, 2022  
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**Melanie Wilson, Executive Director** Date  
**Chatham County-Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission**

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*Leah G. Michalak* August 4, 2022  
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**Leah G. Michalak, Director of Urban Planning and Historic Preservation** Date  
**Chatham County-Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission**

**MW: LGM: cc**