

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Chatham- Savannah Historic Sites and Monuments Commission  
**FROM:** Joe Shearouse Jr.  
**DATE:** August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018  
**SUBJECT:** Naming Petition Request- Savannah Cultural Arts Center

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**Proposed Name:** Savannah Cultural Arts Center  
**Location:** 201 Montgomery Street, Savannah Georgia  
**Petitioner:** City of Savannah  
**Staff contact:** Joe Shearouse, [jshearouse01@savannahga.gov](mailto:jshearouse01@savannahga.gov), (912) 658-4092

### Staff Recommendation

1. Recommend approval to name the new facility located at 201 Montgomery Street the 'Savannah Cultural Arts Center', to highlight the City of Savannah's dedication to local cultural arts.

### Requirements for naming newly created, acquired, or unnamed property. (Sec.4-1102)

#### Criteria Requirement

- ✓ It commemorates local history, places, events or culture; and
- ✓ It will strengthen neighborhood identity.

#### Restrictions

- ✓ No Duplication of name

#### Considerations

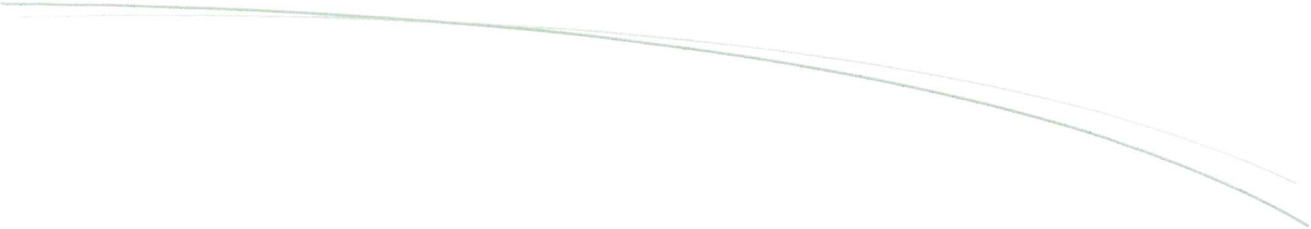
- ✓ The number of residents and businesses directly affected;
- ✓ Community diversity;
- ✓ The historical significance of preexisting name or location;
- ✓ The appropriateness and compatibility of the request in relation to the existing area;
- ✓ The impact on emergency service delivery; and
- ✓ Continuity and stability.

#### Natural Person Request

N/A

#### Formal Request Requirements

- ✓ The precise location and description of the subject property;
- ✓ A thorough discussion regarding the history of the property or surrounding area, as may be applicable;
- ✓ The name, address and contact information of the requestor; and

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- ✓ An endorsement by the current Mayor, an at-large alderman or the alderman representing the district in which the property is located.

Attachments

1. Petition request
  - a. Official request
  - b. Map of location
  - c. Mayor's endorsement
2. City Staff comments on request
  - a. Brief history of property



## Office of the Mayor Savannah, Georgia

**Eddie W. DeLoach**  
Mayor

August 1st, 2018

City Hall  
2 East Bay Street  
Savannah, Georgia 31402

### **Re: Name Request Endorsement- Savannah Cultural Arts Center**

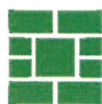
To Whom It May Concern,

I, Mayor Eddie DeLoach, officially endorse the naming request to name the property located at 201 Montgomery Street, the 'Savannah Cultural Arts Center' in accordance with all the naming process and rules listed within Section 4-1102.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Eddie W. DeLoach". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Mayor Eddie DeLoach



## **HISTORICAL CONTEXT: SAVANNAH CULTURAL ARTS CENTER PROPERTY**

The Savannah Cultural Arts Center property is bounded on the north by Oglethorpe Avenue (formerly South Broad Street), on the east by Montgomery Street, on the south by Turner Street, and on the west by Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard (formerly West Broad Street). This site is the northwest corner of Elbert Ward. Elbert Ward, and its central Elbert Square, were laid out by City ordinance on April 20, 1801. This ordinance also identified the bisecting east-west streets of the ward (from north to south) as Chatham, Screven, and Wilkes streets. By ordinance of July 19, 1815, these streets were renamed Hull (Chatham), McDonough (Screven) and Perry (Wilkes) streets. Elbert Ward and Square are named for Samuel Elbert, Revolutionary War hero and Georgia Governor (1785). It was the thirteenth square created according to Oglethorpe's town plan.

The northwest quadrant of Elbert Ward, the location of the new Savannah Cultural Arts Center, was the site of a significant upper-class urban dwelling, the Wetter House (preceded by the Barclay House), as well as smaller residential structures to the south. Anthony Barclay purchased the property from the Bank of Georgia in 1822 and constructed a house around 1822. Barclay sold the property to Mrs. Margaret Telfair in 1837. Via her will, the property transferred to Augustus P. Wetter, husband of Telfair's granddaughter, Sarah Alberta Cobb Telfair, in 1859. Augustus Wetter was a Savannah alderman, Director of the Bank of South Georgia, President of the German Aid Society, and a local businessman. Between 1853 and 1861, the Wetter House was constructed on the site, possibly on the foundation of the earlier Barclay House. The Wetter House was a stucco three story home over a basement known for its ornate cast iron railings along wrap-around balconies. The ironwork featured central medallions with profile cameos of famous poets, writers, and statesmen. The house was oriented on the northwest corner of the site, with a perimeter garden wall enclosing a rear and side garden from the lane and main street.

The Wetter House became the Savannah Female Orphan Asylum in 1891 and the enclosed garden area was used as a children's play area. The existing lane building, still standing on the site, was built circa 1888-1898, either during the tail end of the site's use by the Wetter family or during its early days as the Asylum. It is a one story brick structure and was built along the south side of the garden, incorporating the wall in to its southern façade. It served as an outbuilding for the main house. There were additional structures along the lane, including supporting outbuildings, servants' quarters, and small dwellings. The Asylum property was sold to Dearing Chevrolet Company in 1950 and the Wetter House and all its supporting structures, with the exception of the existing lane building, were torn down in 1950 to create a used car lot. The extant lane building was used as an office for



## Historical Context: Savannah Cultural Arts Center Property

the car lot. Auto sales continued on the lot until 1986, and the most recent use of the lane building was for Savannah EMS Station No. 1. This property was purchased by Chatham Area Transit in 2001 and by the City of Savannah in 2011. The existing lane building is the last extant 19<sup>th</sup> century structure in Elbert Ward and serves as an example of the supporting structures once found along the lanes for the larger residences of the ward.

Elbert Ward, originally a predominantly residential neighborhood, was significantly altered in the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the introduction of the automobile and the removal of virtually all traces of residential architecture. By the 1930s, the neighborhood was in a period of decline with mostly rental properties and absentee landlords. Elbert Square has been virtually lost, bisected by Montgomery Street/US Highway 17 in 1937 and partially obstructed by the entrance drive of the Savannah Civic Center in the 1970s. The construction of the Savannah Civic Center took over the entire eastern half of Elbert Ward, including both trust lots and all of the eastern tythings, demolishing all residential architecture in this half of the ward in the process. In addition, the Civic Center's design, including landscaping and parking, obstructed the flow of Elbert Ward's east-west streets.

### **Sources:**

Archaeology Study of the New Cultural Arts Center Site, Event #2297, Section II, Scope of Work, 2.0 Broad Description of Project. City of Savannah, Purchasing Department, 2014.

Gunn Meyerhoff Shay Architects. "Cultural Arts Center Design Services, Exhibit C: Historic Building Survey." Final, March 18, 2014. Pages 2, 4, 7, 11.

Gunn Meyerhoff Shay Architects. "Cultural Arts Center Design Services, Exhibit C: Historic Building Survey." Draft, 2014. Pages, 2-6.

Henry, Charles S., Esq., compiled by. *A Digest of All the Ordinances of the City of Savannah...* Published by order of Council. Savannah, GA: Purse's Print, 1854. Page 94.

Jordan, Michael and Mick McCay. *Savannah Square by Square*. Savannah, GA: Historic Savannah Foundation, Inc., 2015. Page 91.

Sieg, Chan. *The Squares: An Introduction to Savannah*. Norfolk, VA: The Donning Co/Publishers, 1984. Page 145.

August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018

City Manager's Office  
City Hall  
2 East Bay Street  
Savannah, Georgia 31402

**Re: Name Request- Savannah Cultural Arts Center**

To Whom It May Concern,

In accordance with 'Section 4-1102. - Naming new facilities or public property', the City of Savannah is requesting the new facility located at 201 Montgomery Street be name the "Savannah Cultural Arts Center".

The property is bounded on the north by Oglethorpe Avenue (formerly South Broad Street), on the east by Montgomery Street, on the south by Turner Street, and on the west by Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard (formerly West Broad Street).

This property was the site of a significant upper-class urban dwelling, the Wetter House (preceded by the Barclay House), as well as smaller residential structures to the south.

The name Savannah Cultural Arts Center highlights the City's commitment to enhance the community's art, performance and cultural opportunities.

The name has the official endorsement of Mayor DeLoach and has followed all the naming process and rules listed within Section 4-1102.

Thank you,

City of Savannah

Staff Contact

Joe Shearouse Jr.

(912) 651-6401

