



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: Luciana Spracher, City of Savannah
File No.: 25-003989-COA
Address: Five locations in East Savannah
PIN: 20058 04014; 20058 04018; 10278 01021A; 20039 0600; 20058 06018
Staff Reviewer: Caitlin Chamberlain
Date: September 4, 2025

NATURE OF REQUEST:

The applicant is requesting approval to install five interpretive historical signs at various locations in East Savannah. As stated by the applicant, *"The East Savannah Historical Markers project is a series of five interpretive signs that help convey the unique history of the East Savannah Neighborhood."*

The proposed markers include:

1. East Savannah Neighborhood- Southeast corner of Pennsylvania Avenue and Gwinnett Street
2. Savannah Sports Arena – Southside of East Gwinnett Street, just east of the intersection of Wyoming Street
3. East Savannah Cemetery- Eastern end of Alaska Street
4. First African Baptist Church of East Savannah – Southwest corner of Gabe Street and Treat Avenue
5. Latson Grocery – Southeast corner of Treat Avenue and Gwinnett Street

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.

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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.

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.

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

The above standards are met. There are multiple relevant themes within this project that tell the story of the community as a whole and there is significant documented evidence of the East Savannah neighborhood. The applicant provided details regarding the themes that are covered in this proposal:

- Arts and Humanities
 - The Savannah Sports Arena was a significant sporting and entertainment venue for Savannah prior to the Savannah Civic Center opening, hosting local and national athletes and performers of significance.
- Social and Humanitarian
 - The East Savannah Cemetery marker will discuss the cemetery's history as a burial ground for formerly enslaved individuals and the organization of the Community Club of Savannah to care for this sacred land.
- Industry and Commerce
 - The Latson Grocery marker touches on the many contributions of those who lived in East Savannah through their professions.

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- Religious History
 - First African Baptist Church of East Savannah, along with other neighborhood churches like St. Mary's AME Church, East Savannah Church of Christ Holiness unto the Lord, and Holy Zion Church of God, have been cornerstones on the East Savannah community, encouraging not only a sense of fellowship within the church walls but within the larger neighborhood.
- Local History:
 - The entire series of five markers help to identify the unique story of the East Savannah neighborhood and draw attention to it, starting with Marker 1 which sets the tone with the story of its development.
- Cultural and Ethnic Heritage
 - East Savannah was settled by African American families starting in the 1880s. The neighborhood has a rich history, and the entire series of markers touches on various aspects of the community from its early development to religion, education, work, and fun.

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.

Each of the five proposed sign locations were carefully selected to ensure that no site overcrowding will occur.

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 project is initiated by the City, and their Park and Tree Department will verify the locations for the above.

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 for all five.

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 standard is met.

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

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The selected locations are not known to be accident-prone areas.

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

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.

All of the above standards are met.

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.*

Markers commemorating an event should be sited within 100 feet of the event site or adjacent to the nearest public right-of-way.

A marker commemorating a place, such as a significant piece of architecture, should be located within 100 feet of the place or adjacent to the nearest public right-of-way.

The standards are met. The proposed markers cover a variety of themes relevant to this history of the neighborhood and in close proximity to places of significance.

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.*

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The proposed markers are mounted on freestanding poles. They will be designed in the style of the Coffee Bluff/White Bluff historical markers approved in 2019 [19-000018-HM]. A photo of these signs as an example was provided in the submittal packet.

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. Temporary markers may be other shapes, sizes, and colors.

The proposed sign series will not be the standard Georgia Historical Society marker style. In this case, staff finds that this is acceptable because the goal is to have an identifiable style tying the series together and to be made in a similar fashion to the Coffee Bluff/White Bluff signs.

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

These will not be included.

Except the marker title, the marker text should be no 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.

All five markers will be identical (with the exception of Marker 1 being double-sided; all others will be single-sided). The City's logo and the year will be added to the bottom corners.

- The size will be 36" by 24" high (mounted 4.5 feet above ground)
- Color: City of Savannah green background with white text
- Materials: 6 mm max metal (color matched tamper proof hardware)
- Installation: 4"x4" pressure treated wood posts set in concrete
- Text orientation: Centered
- City Logo: Lower left corner
- Year of Installation: Lower right corner
- Font Size: Title 1.46" and Body .57"

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

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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.

The funding has been secured through the Municipal Archives and Transportation Services departments.

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 project is initiated by the City of Savannah and the escrow payment is thus waived.

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. Public notice was sent. At the time of the writing of this report, no public comment has been received.

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RECOMMENDATION:

The Historic Site and Monument Commission recommend approval to the Savannah City Council for the creation and installation of five (5) interpretive historical markers throughout the East Savannah Neighborhood as requested, to be docketed on a City Council agenda, because the work meets the standards within the Master Plan and Guidelines for Markers, Monuments, and Public Art.

DocuSigned by:

Catherine Kostilnik

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Catherine D. Kostilnik, Chair
Historic Site and Monument Commission

09/04/2025

Date

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Melanie Wilson

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

09/04/2025

Date

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Caitlin Chamberlain, Director of Historic Preservation & Urban Design
Chatham County-Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission

09/04/2025

Date