



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

PETITIONER: Joe Shearouse
FILE No.: 25-004049-COA
LOCATION: Crawford Square
DATE: September 4th, 2025
STAFF REVIEWER: Kelli Mitchell

NATURE OF REQUEST:

The applicant is requesting approval to name the basketball court in Crawford Square after Larry "Gator" Rivers.

FINDINGS:

The following standards from the Historic Site and Monument Commission Guidelines for Markers, Monuments and Public Art apply:

Article E- Naming and Renaming of Public Property, Facilities and Streets.

General policy. As a general policy, the Mayor and Aldermen find that public property should be named after its principal function, location, or historical reference; however, significant community events, organizations or well-known persons with important contributions to the community, state or nation may deserve public recognition, which may occur by way of naming or renaming public rights-of-way or facilities.

Naming criteria and requirements.

Criteria. Naming or renaming of a public right-of-way or facility shall occur only when the proposed naming or renaming satisfied at least one of the following criteria:

It honors and commemorates a noteworthy person associated with the City of Savannah, Chatham County, the State of Georgia or the United States of America;

It commemorates local history, places, events or culture;

It will strengthen neighborhood identity; or

It recognizes native wildlife or natural geographical features.

Rivers was a Savannah local. He lived in Savannah through high school and would move back in 2008. He lived in Savannah until he passed away in April of 2023.

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During his life, he played basketball at Beach High School, Moberly Junior College, and Missouri Western State University. He would also play for the Harlem Globetrotters. After retirement, he established GatorBall Academy in St. Joseph, Missouri. After moving back to Savannah in 2008, he continued his youth development and community service efforts. He was elected to the Chatham County Commissioners in 2020 and focused on food security and improving quality of life for residents.

***Exclusions.** The following shall not be considered for purposes of naming or renaming:*

Persons that resided in the City of Savannah for less than five years, other than prominent national figures;

Rivers lived in Savannah more than five years.

Names assigned to existing public property within the City or unincorporated Chatham County where duplication of the name is likely to lead to confusion; and

As far as staff is aware, this name is not used elsewhere in the city or county.

Except as set forth in Section 4-1106 of this Article, commercial names where usage of such name would amount to advertising.

The proposed name would not amount to advertising.

***Considerations.** Naming requests shall consider:*

The number of residents and businesses directly affected;

Community diversity;

The standards are met.

The historical significance of preexisting name or location;

The applicant is only requesting the basketball court in the square be named and is not requesting the renaming of the entire square. A basketball court was first constructed on the site in the late 1940s. So, this is not an original element and is not something that has gained significance. Staff finds that the standard is met.

The appropriateness and compatibility of the request in relation to the existing area;

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The honoree was a known basketball player who not only played at the high school and collegiate level but also with the Harlem Globetrotters. He also established sports based organizations. Staff finds that naming the court after Rivers is appropriate.

The impact on emergency service delivery; and

The proposed name will not negatively impact emergency services.

Continuity and stability.

The standard is met.

Additional considerations for persons. Requests to name a public right-of-way or facility in honor of a natural person should also consider the following:

Absent extraordinary or extenuating circumstances, the proposed honoree shall be deceased;

The honoree passed away in 2023.

Whether the proposed namesake made a sustained contribution over an appreciable time period, exerted efforts of benefit or significance to local, state or national affairs and/or demonstrated leadership in governmental, cultural or historical affairs, humanitarian efforts, or community development;

Rivers made an impact in both Savannah as a council person and with his community service work and in St. Joseph, Missouri, with the GatorBall Academy.

Contributions that beneficially changed the nature and characteristics of the community; and

Staff finds that the standards are met.

Achievement by a native Savannahian of national or international acclaim in a specific field of endeavor that has reflected positively on Savannah.

Staff finds that the standard is met given that Rivers carried out community service work in both Savannah and in Missouri.

Naming new facilities or public property.

Application requirements. All requests to name newly acquired, created or previously unnamed public property shall be made in writing and directed to the attention of the City Manager. Such requests shall include:

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The precise location and description of the subject property;

The applicant indicated that the naming is for the basketball field in Crawford Square.

A thorough discussion regarding the history of the property or surrounding area, as may be applicable;

Per a placard located within the square, "The City of Savannah held a basketball tournament in 1946 and the winning team was to be awarded a paved basketball court, The Crawford Square team won, and in 1947 the basketball court was constructed. The basketball court helped to develop and expand recreational opportunities for youth in the community, and established what remains as the only active recreational square in Savannah. Many of those players went on to pursue athletic careers in college and become productive citizens." Based on this information, a basketball court in some capacity has existed in the park since the mid-1940s.

Given that the naming only applies to a specific part of the square, a full history is not necessary in this case.

The name address and contact information of the request; and

The standard is met.

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

The applicant provided a letter of support from the Alderman.

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RECOMMENDATION TO CITY COUNCIL:

The Historic Site and Monument Commission recommends approval to the Savannah City Council to name the basketball court in Crawford Square after Larry “Gator” Rivers as requested to be docketed on a City Council agenda because the proposed naming meets the standards within *Article E- Naming and Renaming of Public Property, Facilities and Streets*.

DocuSigned by:

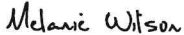


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Catherine D. Kostilnik, Chair
Historic Site and Monument Commission

September 4, 2025

Date

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

September 4, 2025

Date

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

September 4, 2025

Date