



SAVANNAH-CHATHAM COUNTY HISTORIC SITE AND MONUMENT COMMISSION

HISTORICAL MARKER RECOMMENDATION

PETITIONER: Georgia Historical Society, Elyse Butler

FILE No.: 22-006000-HM

LOCATION: Dixon Park: Intersection of East Broad Street and East Henry Street

DATE: February 2, 2023

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 Dixon Park at the public right-of-way intersection of East Broad Street and East Henry Street to commemorate suffragist and community leader, Mamie George Williams.

As per the applicant:

“The historical marker highlights her political and social impact on a local, statewide and national level. The proposed location for the historical marker is in Dixon Park, the neighborhood where Mamie George Williams lived and worked.”

The proposed marker is to read as follows:

Mamie George Williams, a life-long resident of Savannah, lived and worked near here. A political and civic leader, Williams volunteered for many organizations, including the Red Cross, the Girl Scouts, and the National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs. A suffragist, she organized voter campaigns and registered African American women to vote following passage of the 19th Amendment. Nonetheless, African Americans were denied full voting rights, due to Jim Crow laws. In 1924, Williams became the first woman from Georgia and the first African American woman in the nation to serve on the Republican National Committee. A community leader, she led fundraising efforts for a home in Macon for African American girls and served as vice president of Carver State Bank. She worked with the African American Girl Scouts, financially assisting with establishing their Log Cabin Camp in Hancock County.

Erected by the Georgia Historical Society, the League of Women’s Voters, Coastal Georgia, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.- Savannah Alumnae Chapter, and *The Savannah Tribune*

FINDINGS:

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

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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 standard is met. The Mamie George Williams historical marker illustrates themes of Civic and Institutional, Social and Humanitarian, and Local History. Per the applicant:

“The Mamie George Williams historical marker demonstrates the Civic and Institutional theme through the accomplishments of Mrs. Williams as the first African American woman and the first woman from Georgia to sit on the National Republican Committee. Mamie George Williams also registered thousands of African American women in Georgia to vote in the anticipation of the passage of the 19th Amendment and despite Jim Crow era laws and voting restrictions against African Americans that would continue until after her death in 1951.

“Mamie George Williams was involved in many philanthropic efforts throughout the state She was instrumental in fundraising for many efforts, such as the establishment of a home and training center for girls in Macon, and the creation of a log cabin for the Negro Division of Girl Scouts in Hancock County.

“A native Savannahian, Mamie George Williams lived and worked in the Dixon Park neighborhood. She promoted community uplift through her involvement with Greenbriar Children’s Home and as a board member of the Negro Division of the Girl Scouts of Savannah. She also served on the board of what is now known as Carver State Bank, which served Savannah’s African American population.”

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 standard is met. Although active beyond Savannah and Chatham County, Williams was first a native Savannahian who served her community. Williams is not commemorated elsewhere in Savannah.

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

The standard is met. As a native Savannahian and civic leader, Williams’ work reflects a larger connection to the community as a whole.

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

The standard is met. Williams was active in the 1920s through the time of her death in 1951.

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. Williams has endured historical significance and has been deceased for over twenty-five years.

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 consulted with Gordon Denney, Senior Director at the City of Savannah Parks & Tree Department about the appropriateness of the chosen location. The standard is met.

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

Staff recommends that the applicant provide confirmation from the appropriate City Departments that the location is clear of any 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 Dixon Park and not prone to automobile accidents.

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

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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.

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 marker is proposed within a grassy area of a City-owned park, which is typically easy to maintain.

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 civic and political leader who lived and worked in the Dixon Park vicinity.

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 Dixon Park, which is the neighborhood where Williams lived and worked.

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.

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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 the funding has been secured.

Per the applicant:

“The estimated overall cost for a historical marker within the Georgia Historical Marker Program is \$5,000.00. The Georgia Historical Society has secured funds of \$5,000.00 for the total cost of the historical marker.”

The standard is met.

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 applicant has accepted and taken on the role of all future maintenance of the marker, relinquishing the requirement of supplying an escrow payment to the City of Savannah.

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.

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RECOMMENDATION TO CITY COUNCIL:

The Historic Site and Monument Commission recommend approval to the Savannah City Council to install a historical marker in Dixon Park near the intersection of East Henry Street and Java Lane with the following condition because the proposed work otherwise meets the Master Plan and Guidelines:

- 1. Provide confirmation from the appropriate City Departments that the location is clear of any utilities before installation.**

DocuSigned by:
Kristopher Monroe
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February 2, 2023
Date
Mr. Kristopher Monroe, Chairman
Historic Site and Monument Commission

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Melanie Wilson
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February 2, 2023
Date
Melanie Wilson, Executive Director
Chatham County-Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission

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MW: LGM: cc